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LOOK BOTH WAYS ... AN ELECTION COULD BE COMING

POLITICIANS RAMP UP THE TRANSIT-FUNDING DEBATE PAGE 3

Newest nation could crumble over violence

Fear of civil war looms over South Sudan as more than 500 people have been killed in the last four days PAGE 20

The return of De Rosario an odd scenario

Toronto FC ready to re-sign team's all-time top scorer despite their ugly breakup, his age and salary PAGE 54

Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious!

Mary Poppins selected for preservation at the Library of Congress, along with 24 other notable films PAGE 44

TTC positions on the verge of obsolescence

Modernization. CEO Andy Byford says staff will be reallocated, not laid off over transition

Many of Toronto's frontline transit workers are on the verge of a major job shift, now that a push to modernize the TTC is finally taking hold.

A plan to begin testing single-operator subway trains next year marks the beginning of the end of the guard position. That's the second operator, the one who pokes his or her head out to ensure that no one has been caught in a door.

Eliminating that job, which pays about $31 an hour, will be closely followed by a new role for subway collectors as the TTC begins a full-scale launch of the automated Presto fare-card system. The collector position will be "re-engineered" into more mobile, direct customer-assistance roles, said CEO Andy Byford.

"We're not looking to have people lose their jobs, but jobs will change," Byford stressed.

He promised that there won't be any layoffs. All safety protocols will be developed in consultation with the union.

Byford plans to replace the subway guards with cameras on the platforms and monitors in the train cabs.

TTC workers' union president Bob Kinnear said he's against the single-driver trains because it's better to have more eyes on the system.

Plus, "there's no better deterrent than having people there," he said, citing last Friday's shooting at Queen station.

The TTC has no intention of moving to driverless trains, like Vancouver's SkyTrain, even though the introduction of new signaling technology makes that potentially viable. Nor does it intend to de-staff stations, Byford said.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Inevitable?

"To do nothing, to think that we're immune to change, is not an option."

TTC CEO Andy Byford

GOOD WILL TOWARD MEN

From left: Ariane Ghany, Martina Kakurova, Andrea Sanchez and Esther Jorge distribute gifts to the homeless on Toronto streets on Wednesday. The students at Evergreen College received donations from the likes of Avon, the Trump Hotel as well as family and friends to make their class project a success. The boxes contain winter essentials such as hats, gloves, chocolate, granola bars and toiletries. KAREN KUS/FOR METRO

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Provincial politicians get ready for transit showdown

Runaway train. Liberal plan to include tax hikes being criticized by opposition

JESSICA SMITH CROSS
jessica.smithcross@metronews.ca

Premier Kathleen Wynne is determined to stake her government on a new tax or revenue tool to fund building transit in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton area, as the opposition parties ready their own plans and prepare to fight an election over them.

Here's where they stand now.

In an interview with Metro, Minister of Transportation Glen Murray said the details of the plan to fund transit expansion will be coming in the 2014 budget, but some promises are ready to be made now.

The Liberal plan will include revenue tools, such as sales tax and gas tax increases. The government is looking at two years' worth of studies, but what will be in the budget is unclear, he said.

"We take any ask of the citizens of Ontario for any additional contributions to the public purse very, very seriously, and it's not something we will rush into," he said.

New revenue will be spent in funds dedicated to transit-defined areas, such as Ottawa, Kitchen-Waterloo and rural Ontario, Murray said. Whatever method is chosen, the government will ensure that people outside of the GTHA will not be paying for GTHA transit.

"That's to ensure that we don't have one part of the province being singularly taxed to subsidized taxes in another."

The opposition takes issue with that promise. PC MPP Lisa MacLeod told reporters Wednesday she does not trust the premier to keep the promise and called revenue tools "a boondoggle waiting to happen."

"When you look at the waste — just this last week at (Ontario Power Generation) or with the gas plants — it takes a lot of nerve to go back to taxpayers and say you're paying for our mistakes and we can't build infrastructure in Toronto, so we're going to tax you," she said.

"Families in Ontario ... are going to be forced to pay and subsidize transit in Toronto. I think that's wrong."

In response, Murray accused her of playing a political game.

"The Conservatives love to talk about mini-Ontarios and set up rural Ontario against urban Ontario and Ottawa against Toronto and the suburbs against the North," Murray replied. "That's not the way we're looking at it."

Murray said the whole province is needed to pay for infrastructure projects that are important for the entire province, and too expensive for local taxpayers alone, such the international bridge project in Windsor and the development in the Ring of Fire.

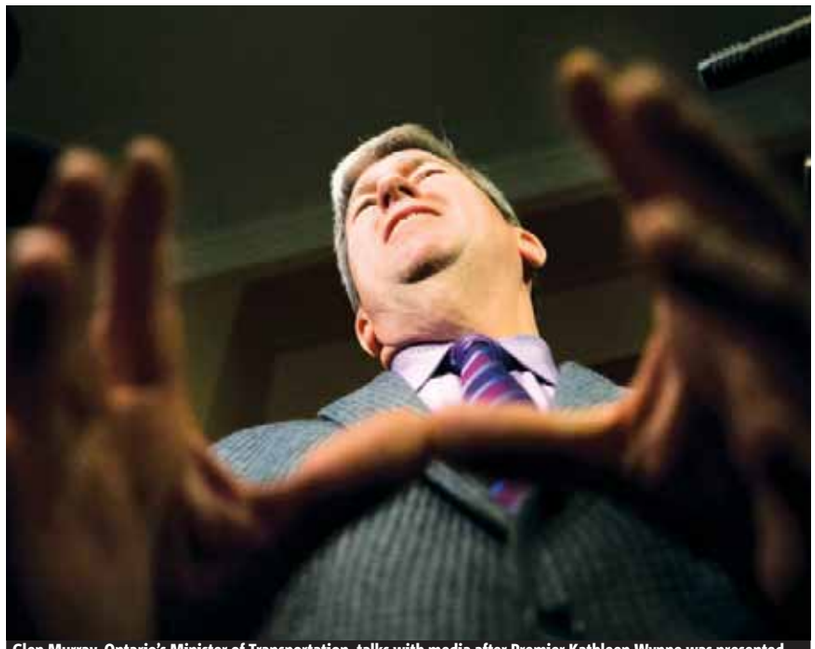
Provincial funding already pledged for transit projects, such as the Scarborough subway and Ottawa's LRT, has to come from all over the province, he said.

Murray offered an argument to sell the public on the Liberal's revenue-tools plan — paying more money will save many people money over time because the transit projects to come will allow them to cut down or eliminate car costs.

"What we're looking at is the total household transportation budget," he said. "We're trying to make it more affordable for people — and people have trouble with this, it's counterintuitive."

The revenue tools will not completely fund new transit, nor all of the outstanding costs of the GTHA Big Move transit plan, Murray said.

The Liberal's financing plan includes strategies to get revenue from government-owned land by taxing the increased value of the land when it is served by transit. Proceeds from asset sales — such as the LCBO's Toronto head office and the remaining interest in General Motors — will go into a trust dedicated to transit, said Murray.



Glen Murray, Ontario's Minister of Transportation, talks with media after Premier Kathleen Wynne was presented with the transit investment report by Anne Golden, chair of the transit investment strategy advisory panel, at Queen's Park last week. CHRIS YOUNG/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Quoted

"What we're looking at is the total household transportation budget ... We're trying to make it more affordable for people — and people have trouble with this, it's counterintuitive."

Glen Murray, Minister of Transportation

She said, he said

Opposition parties weigh in

PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVES

On Thursday, the Progressive Conservatives will release their final white paper "Building Great Cities," containing their plans for financing transit projects, MPP Lisa MacLeod said Wednesday.

The party has made it clear they don't support revenue tools such as a gas tax.

According to MacLeod, Hudak's plans to monetize — or sell — the LCBO and Ontario Power Generation will be part of the plan to pay for rapid transit projects.

Hudak has said the party wants to prioritize subways, delaying other transportation projects.

If elected, it would create the Ontario Transportation Trust, where money can only be spent on priority transportation projects.

He said the Tories would dedicate a portion of new revenues to the trust, commercialize more space in and above transit stations and sell surplus lands and excess government buildings.

According to the party, using modern technology to break gridlock — such as electronic signs to vary speed limits to prevent traffic jams — will be a key policy plank.

NEW DEMOCRATS

The New Democrats will have a plan to finance transit building ready for the next election, said their urban transit critic, MPP Rosario Marchese.

The NDP wants to build new transit infrastructure and believes money to finance it should come at least in part from corporate taxes, and will not support a gas tax increase, said Marchese.

"The details of that plan will have to be unveiled as we get closer to an election," he said. The party will respond to the transit plan the government proposes in the budget — but he wasn't able to say if the NDP's own plan will be in place by then.

"We don't know what the (Liberal's) plan is and that's been the problem all along. They talk about doing something, building new transit infrastructure, but we never see the plan," said Marchese. "So it's hard to comment on what they might want to do." JESSICA SMITH CROSS/METRO

Mayor Rob Ford has highest support for his agenda in Scarborough and North York. KEITH BEATY/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE FILE

Ford still has solid support, especially in suburbs: Poll

Thirty-nine per cent of Toronto voters would consider voting for Mayor Rob Ford in the next municipal election, according to a poll conducted by Ipsos Reid that was released on Wednesday.

Despite admitting to smoking crack cocaine and being stripped of many of his powers by the rest of council, it appears that many voters, who may be dismayed by the mayor's behaviour, are attracted by his agenda, according to the poll.

In fact, almost two-thirds of residents polled (62 per cent) agree that "they hope city council and Deputy Mayor Norm Kelly continue with Mayor Ford's agenda."

The difference between those who agree with his agenda and those who are against it shows the vast difference in political opinion between residents living in the core and those in the suburbs.

Support for Ford's agenda was highest in Scarborough at 75 per cent and North York at 74 per cent, followed by Etobicoke (62 per cent) and York/East York (58 per cent).

In comparison, a majority (58 per cent) of Torontonians living downtown disagree that council and the deputy mayor should continue Ford's agenda.

The poll was conducted from Dec. 9 to 13 using a sample of 485 Toronto residents. The poll is considered accurate to plus-minus 5.1 percentage points of the entire Torontonian adult population.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Working group hopes to tweak Gehry project

King Street West. Project's massive scale is drawing concern at city hall

A city working group is looking for "a way to say yes" to the controversial David Mirvish-Frank Gehry sky-rise proposal on King Street West.

"We're moving a report to refuse the building as it's currently configured," said Adam Vaughan, councillor for the ward that would become home to the proposed towers designed by renowned architect Gehry, in place of four heritage buildings owned by Mirvish.

"We endorse the content of the building; we're having trouble with the dimensions. We'll be working with the applicant and some prominent Torontonians from the arts, architecture, planning and local community to facilitate, hopefully, a consensus," Vaughan said, adding it was a way to avoid a showdown at the Ontario Municipal Board.

Vaughan is introducing a motion that would give official sanction to the working group, which is already at work. While the staff report is simply rejecting the proposal, Vaughan says, the working group "is refusing it, but creating a process to solve the problem."

While concerns remain over the size and scale of the project, including three towers 82 to 86 storeys high, containing more than 2,700 residential units — and the demolition of existing heritage buildings — some councillors hope to work out a compromise, he said.

In particular, the working group would aim to protect aspects of the proposal that include involvement by the Ontario College of Art and Design and a gallery of Mirvish's extensive private art collection.

The working group members have not yet been confirmed. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Quoted

"We endorse the content of the building; we're having trouble with the dimensions."

Coun. Adam Vaughan

Daniel Dale

Reporter abandons suit against mayor

Mayor Rob Ford has issued a second and more extensive apology to Toronto Star reporter Daniel Dale for comments made during a televised interview with Conrad Black.

Dale has accepted the mayor's apology and will no longer pursue a defamation lawsuit against Ford.

"I sincerely appreciate Mayor Ford's complete retraction and unqualified apology, and I'm very glad the truth is no longer in dispute. I won't be taking legal action against the mayor, and I'm looking forward to getting back to work."

Ford made the comments in question when he was interviewed by Black on his television show The Zoomer.

Black asked Ford to describe the most "offensive events" involving the media. Ford discussed a May 2, 2012, incident when he confronted Dale as the reporter was on a piece of public property near the mayor's Etobicoke home.

Dale was investigating the mayor's attempt to purchase parkland.

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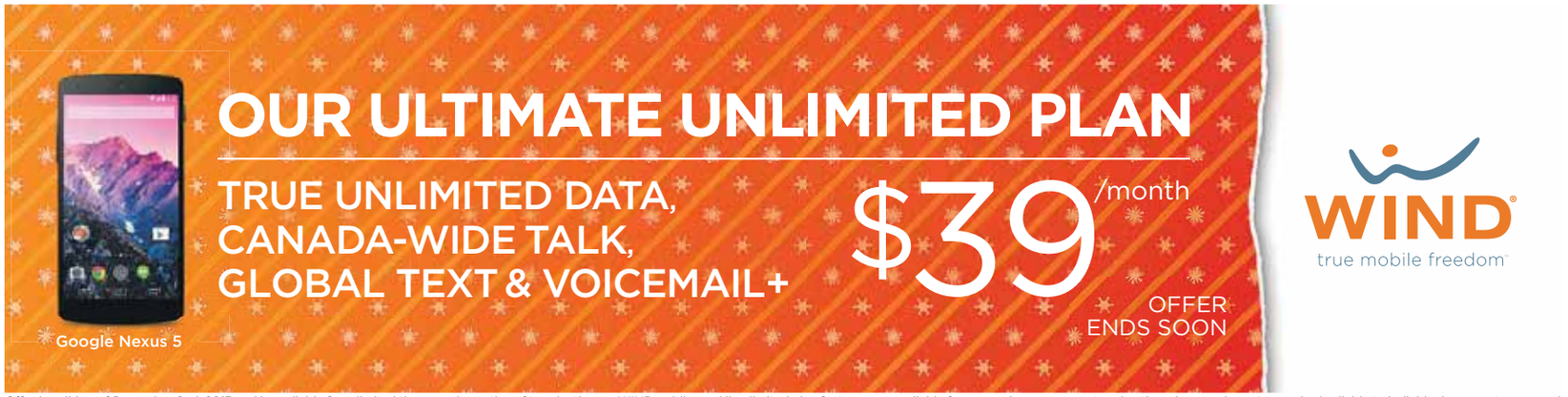

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Gas tax tarnishes Golden plan: Poll

Just 17 per cent approve. Hiking prices at the pump to build transit proves deeply unpopular in Forum poll

Toronto commuters may be sick of gridlock, but not enough to swallow the tough medicine prescribed last week by an Ontario panel charged with recommending how to fund transit expansion.

A Forum Research poll shows that only 17 per cent of Toronto-area residents approve of the gas-tax-dependent options set out by the Transit Investment Strategy Advisory Panel chaired by Anne Golden.

The panel recommended one of two tax combinations:

1. A three-cent gasoline tax hike in 2015, rising to 10 cents in 2020, or

2. A three-cent gas tax, rising to five cents, combined with a 0.5 per cent HST hike.

Both were less popular than the panel's other recommendations: a 0.5 per cent increase in the corporate income tax and the diversion to a dedicated transit fund of $80 million in HST — money the government already collects on fuel sales.

When the pollsters presented the various taxes separately, the two gas taxes were even less popular than the idea of a 0.5 per cent HST hike in 2018, which got 24 per cent approval.

Forum president Lorne Bozinoff said it will take a tough sell to get the public to accept the Golden recommendations. "These are some pretty tough taxes; the amounts are high and (residents) don't like them," he said.

Years after the province began pitching transit taxes, it still hasn't figured out how to connect the cost and the benefits in the public mind, Bozinoff said.

People wonder: "What are they going to do with it exactly? How's it going to make my life any better?"

The public feels under siege with recent news — that Canada Post plans to quit door-to-door delivery, that TTC fares are going up with no improvement in service — and most people haven't seen any improvement in their household income, said Bozinoff.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

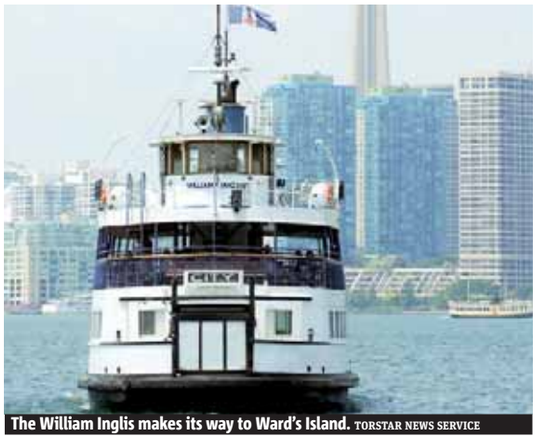
Most acceptable downtown

In the latest poll, the gas taxes recommended by the panel were most acceptable in downtown Toronto, where they drew just over 40 per cent approval. But in Durham Region, they got only a 6 per cent average approval rating. Slightly more transit riders than motorists approved of the gas tax.

World record — check

They set a world record — while trying to make the world a better place. Some 460 students at Brampton's Sandalwood Heights Secondary School, with the help of about 40 adults, put together 1,000 hunger relief packages at the same time — with just three minutes on the clock — on Wednesday afternoon. They beat the Guinness world record set last year by Walmart employees in Arkansas, who assembled 555 packages. Food and help for Sandalwood's attempt was donated by Accenture and Loblaw Companies Ltd., and packages — which contain 10 non-perishable items each — will be taken to area food banks.

ANDREW FRANCIS WALLACE/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE



The William Inglis makes its way to Ward's Island. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Leaky islands ferry out of service

The main ferry operating between the Toronto Islands and the city was taken out of service late Tuesday night, leaving island residents scrambling for access to downtown.

A leak was discovered in the hull of the William Inglis, a 400-passenger boat, said Tanya Kavcic, an operations support officer in the city's parks, forestry and recreation department.

It had been kept in service because the Ongiara, a steel-hulled ferry for passengers and vehicles, is currently in dry dock for servicing.

Quoted

"The issue here is a bigger pattern of mismanagement at the ferry docks."

Steve Cooper, island resident

"Ongiara is scheduled to come out of dry dock (Thursday) or Friday so we can restore normal service," Kavcic said.

Until it does, however, those looking to get on and off the island are relying on a single bus that shuttles them to the Billy Bishop Airport. The bus then waits for a break in takeoffs and landings and drives across the tarmac to the airport's ferry, said Steve Cooper, who has lived on the island for 15 years.

"This is an essential service for a lot of people," he said, adding he was two hours late for work this morning.

Cooper said residents are informed of problems with the ferries through word of mouth.

"The ferry docks will call one woman and she posts it for the whole island to know," he said. "Communication is terrible." Cooper said as of now, they've been told to wait for bus service back to the island next to the washroom in Little Norway Park. The schedule, he said, is irregular.

The Toronto Port Authority said they have waived all passenger fees for residents.

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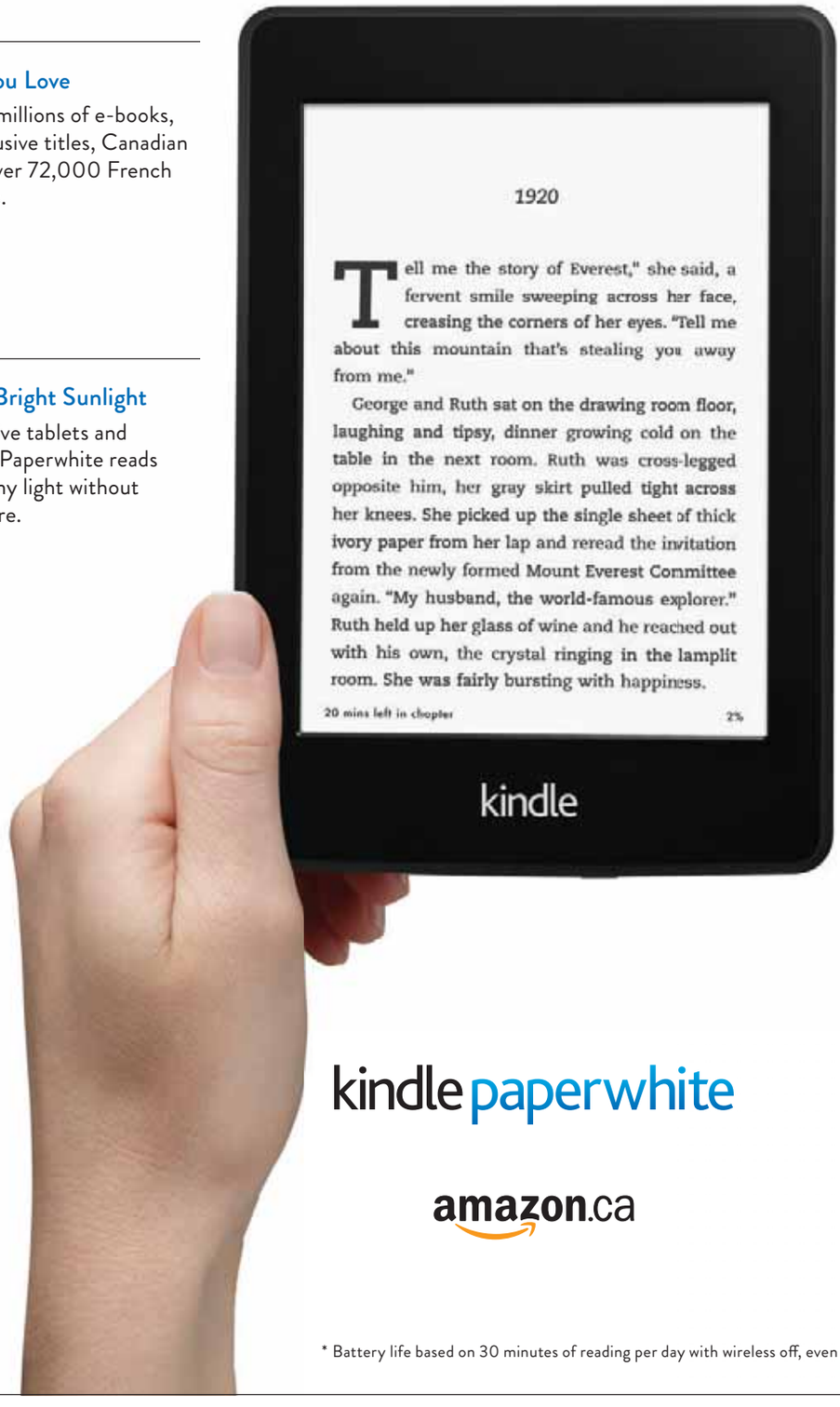

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Liberals hold their lead in GTA: Poll

Liberal Premier Kathleen Wynne. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Progressive Conservative Leader Tim Hudak. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Regional popularity. Premier Kathleen Wynne's Liberals are holding support in their key Greater Toronto political fortress, new poll suggests

A Forum Research survey has found the provincial Liberals have 38 per cent support in and around Toronto, which is home to 45 of Ontario's 107 ridings.

By comparison, Tim Hudak's Progressive Conservatives are at 34 per cent, Andrea Horwath's New Democrats are at 21 per cent, and Mike Schreiner's Greens are at 6 per cent.

"This is becoming like a World War I trench warfare situation," Forum president Lorne Bozinoff said Wednesday of the front-running Liberals and Tories.

"These two sides have hunkered down. The Tories sort of have the Liberals surrounded, but they cannot get into Mississauga … or Toronto," Bozinoff said.

Using interactive voice response phone calls, Forum polled 1,064 GTA residents Saturday and Sunday with results considered accurate to within five percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

Of those polled in Peel Region, 41 per cent favoured the Liberals, 28 per cent the Tories, 20 per cent the New Democrats, and 9 per cent the Greens.

In Halton Region, the Tories were at 39 per cent, the Liberals 36 per cent, and the NDP and Greens with 12 per cent apiece.

In York Region — where a byelection will soon be held to fill the vacancy left by retired PC MPP Peter Shurman (Thornhill) — the Tories garnered 43 per cent, the Liberals 33 per cent, the NDP 18 per cent, and the Greens 5 per cent.

In Durham Region, the Tories were at 49 per cent, the Liberals 26 per cent, the NDP 20 per cent, and the Greens 3 per cent.

Things in the city of Toronto are a bit more challenging for the Conservatives, who recently won their first seat here since the 1999 election when Doug Holyday (Etobicoke-Lakeshore) triumphed in a byelection.

Downtown and East York, the Liberals are at 40 per cent, the NDP 33 per cent, the Tories 22 per cent, and the Greens 3 per cent.

In North York, the Liberals are at 47 per cent, the Tories 31 per cent, the NDP 16 per cent, and the Greens 6 per cent.

In Scarborough, the Liberals are at 40 per cent, the Tories 37 per cent, the NDP 18 per cent, and the Greens 2 per cent.

In Etobicoke and the former city of York, the Liberals are at 42 per cent, the Tories 32 per cent, the NDP 17 per cent, and the Greens 9 per cent.

Bozinoff also polled GTA residents on their views of the three major party leaders.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Leader popularity

The NDP's Horwath is the most personally popular with a 43 per cent approval, 30 per cent disapproval, and 27 per cent unsure.

- By comparison, the Liberals' Wynne has 43 per cent approval, 43 per cent disapproval, and 15 per cent uncertain.
- The Tories' Hudak was well behind with 25 per cent approval, 50 per cent disapproval, and 25 per cent not sure.

NDP Leader Andrea Horwath. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Green Party Leader Mike Schreiner. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

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Canadians least likely to text greetings: Poll

About 59 per cent of Canadians said they had texted holiday greetings in the past — well below the global average of 73 per cent. ISTOCK

Survey. Residents of British Columbia and Alberta more likely to text friends and family during the holidays

Would you dash off a quick text message to wish a friend or family member a Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah or Joyous Kwanzaa instead of calling?

Cellphone-toting Canadians are less likely than their global counterparts to text message home for the holidays, according to the results of an online Ipsos poll of 18,000 people in 24 countries.

Still, 59 per cent said they had done it in the past. That was actually the lowest percentage among the two-dozen countries involved in the survey and well below the global average of 73 per cent.

About 89 per cent of the respondents in Sweden, 84 per cent of South Africans, 83 per cent of Russians and 82 per cent of Spaniards and Indonesians had sent their best wishes by text.

Canadian women were more likely than men to text their friends and family during the holidays (64 per cent versus 54 per cent of Canadian men).

About 46 per cent of the Canadians surveyed said they've used Skype, FaceTime or another video conferencing app to communicate with family members, compared to the global average of 42 per cent.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Talking through their hat?

Trooper should not be fired over missing-hat story, U.S. court rules

An appeals court in North Carolina says a state trooper should not have been fired for changing his story about what became of his wide-brimmed hat.

The three-judge panel determined the 2009 dismissal of Trooper Thomas Wetherington did not match the level of his offence.

Wetherington initially told his immediate supervisor his hat blew off on a windy day during a traffic stop in Craven County along the coast. But court documents say the hat was returned a few weeks later in good condition by one of the people he had pulled over the day he lost it.

The Highway Patrol determined he violated its truthfulness policy. The state can appeal the decision to the state Supreme Court.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

New Alps attraction not for people with fear of heights

Mathieu Dechavanne, head of the Compagnie du Mont Blanc, stands in a glass cube with a see-through bottom that is suspended from the Aiguille du Midi peak in the French Alps, offering a breathtaking view a kilometre down, including Mont Blanc, Europe's highest mountain. Billed as the tallest attraction in Europe, the Pas dans le Vide (Step into the Void) opens to the public Saturday. It was three years in the making. It includes five transparent sides made of three layers of tempered glass fixed with metal to a big support structure.

ALEXIS MORO/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Cecil Williams pets his guide dog, Orlando, in his hospital bed in New York City on Tuesday. JOHN MINCHILLO/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Heroic guide dog ready to retire

Too old to guide. Owner doesn't want to part with dog who leaped onto subway tracks to save him

Cecil Williams, who has been recovering at a New York City hospital with his guide dog Orlando still by his side, had been slated to get another working dog in January or February to replace the 11-year-old black lab who leaped onto subway tracks after his blind owner lost consciousness and fell off the station platform.

Now, he would ideally like to have two dogs — one working and one retired as a pet — if logistics, physical abilities and finances allow.

If that's not possible, the family that raised Orlando as a puppy says it will be "absolutely thrilled to have him back," said Guiding Eyes for the Blind spokeswoman Michelle Brier. "They're very thrilled their little baby has made such a big difference."

Williams said on Tuesday that he couldn't pay for a non-working dog, so he was planning to look for a good home for Orlando. Guiding Eyes provides working dogs for free but cannot cover retired dogs' expenses.

St. Luke's-Roosevelt Hospital Center, where Williams is staying, has been fielding queries from well-wishers offering money and other assistance.

Williams said that if he does decide he's able to care for two dogs, he'd need help paying for the lab's care.

The organization was setting up a fund and planned to post information on its website. If it turns out Williams doesn't need the money, it will be used for other guide dogs.

Williams, 61, and Orlando both escaped serious injury Tuesday when they were bumped by a train passing over them — a miraculous end to a harrowing ordeal that began when Williams felt faint on his way to the dentist.

Witnesses said Orlando barked frantically and tried to stop Williams from tumbling off the platform. Matthew Martin told the New York Post that Orlando leaped onto the tracks as the train approached and kissed Williams to entice him to move. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Christmas scam

Couple lied about stolen gifts: Cops

A Mississauga, Ont., couple who reported their Christmas gifts stolen — including an iPad for their son who has Down syndrome — have been charged with public mischief.

Peel police allege the pair fabricated the theft.

The man and woman claimed that they had been driving home from the mall on Saturday evening when a sheet of ice smashed their back window, causing their purchases to fly out of the vehicle and then be stolen. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Australia. Tourist on her phone plunges off pier while browsing Facebook

A woman was walking along a bay in Melbourne on Monday night when she became distracted by her Facebook feed and plummeted off the pier into the chilly water, Victoria state police said.

A witness called for help and police rushed to the woman's aid. They found her flailing around in the water, about 20 metres from the pier.

"She was still out in the water lying on her back in a floating position because she told us later that she couldn't swim," Senior Constable Dean Kelly of the state water police told the Australian Broadcasting Corp. "She still had her mobile phone in her hand and initially she apologized and said sorry."

The woman was taken to a hospital for treatment.

"With Facebook, or social media in general as far as we're concerned, if you're anywhere near the water just pay attention," Kelly said. "Especially if you can't swim." THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Rescued crane operator suffers severe burns after massive fire

Kingston, Ont.
Authorities concerned damaged crane could come crashing down

A 68-year-old construction worker stranded atop a crane at the centre of a massive fire in Kingston, Ont., was "severely burned" before a military helicopter was able to navigate smoke and leaping flames to airlift him to safety.

Adam Jastrzebski, who had burns to his hands, legs, back and buttocks, was recovering in hospital Wednesday after his dramatic rescue a day earlier, said his employer at Canadian Professional Crane Inc.

"He's in severe pain right now in the hospital and they're giving him morphine," said Aram Malek.

"I'm just surprised no one got hurt more than that because the fire was enormous."

Firefighters from neighbouring communities had to be called in on Tuesday afternoon to help Kingston crews battle the flames which had engulfed an apartment building that was under construction.

A crowd watched from the streets as the crane operator got out of his cab, crept along the boom of the crane to its very edge and waited to be rescued by a team from CFB Trenton.

Meanwhile, authorities focused their attention Wednesday on the charred crane which towered above the still-smouldering remains of the building at the heart of the blaze.

"Right now our biggest risk is having that crane in its current condition," said Kingston fire chief Rheaume Chaput. "It's been impinged by fire and is in a damaged condition. So we want to make sure we make that safe, get that down."

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Members of 424 Squadron, from left, Capt. Jean-Benoit Girard-Beauseigle, Master Cpl. Matt Davidson, Cpl. Iain Cleaton, Sgt. Cory Cisyk and Capt. David Agnew, pose for media at CFB Trenton on Wednesday. Inset: Sgt. Cisyk rescues a crane operator who was stranded at the end of his crane during a huge fire in Kingston, Ont., on Tuesday. LARS HAGBERG/THE CANADIAN PRESS

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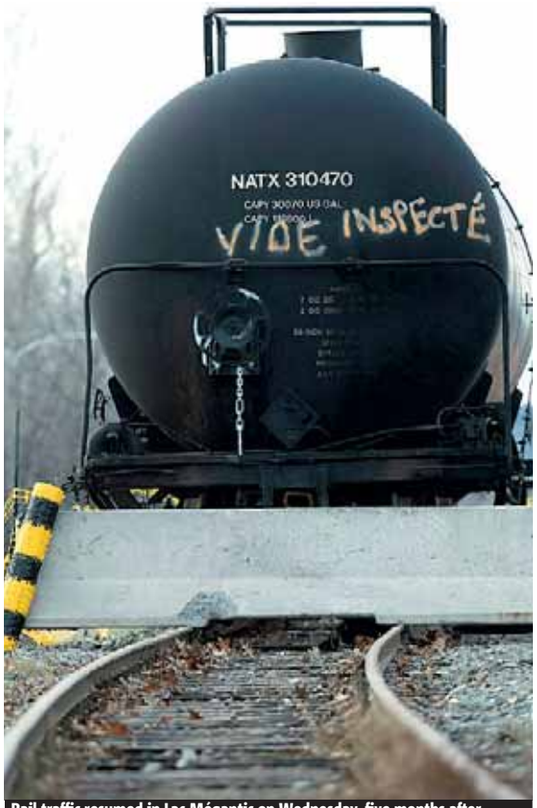

Rail traffic resumed in Lac-Mégantic on Wednesday, five months after a runaway train killed 47 people. GRAHAM HUGHES/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Rail service resumes in Lac-Mégantic after fatal disaster

Mixed feelings. Many locals still trying to cope with the tragedy, while businesses say rail service is vital for town's economy

Trains are rolling through Lac-Mégantic, Que., for the first time since last summer's deadly rail disaster.

Rail service resumed Wednesday in the town where a runaway train carrying crude oil derailed and exploded in July, killing 47 people.

The crash also destroyed part of Lac-Mégantic's downtown core.

Many locals are still trying to cope with the disaster and have mixed feelings about the train's return to the railway-dependent community.

Businesses along the railroad say the service is vital for the town's economy.

The first train arrived at the Tafisa Canada plant in the town's industrial park to pick up a load of particle board. While it was there, tests were carried out to ensure signals were functioning properly on its route out, which took it through the centre of the town.

The train headed to nearby Sherbrooke after leaving the Tafisa factory.

The gradual return of freight trains to Lac-Mégantic must follow strict rules and conditions.

For now, no dangerous substances will be transported through the town, which is about 250 kilometres east of Montreal.

The track is still owned by Montreal, Maine & Atlantic Railway — the company at the heart of the disaster.

The insolvent railway is expected to be sold in the coming weeks.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Conditions

- Transport Canada placed several conditions on the operator before the trains returned to Lac-Mégantic, including the obligation for trains to slow down and make full stops at certain crossings.
- In some cases, locomotive employees will have to get out and check the crossing manually to make sure everything is safe and secure.

Far North

Life expectancy of Inuit trails rest of Canada

A new Statistics Canada study shows Inuit life expectancy still trails that of the rest of the country. Among Inuit men, the main reason for the lower life expectancy was injury, particularly self-inflicted injury among males aged 15 to 24. Among Inuit women, the gap in life expectancy was attributed to cancers and respiratory diseases.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Not snow smart

Tracks in fresh snow lead police to B&E suspect

Police in Windsor are crediting fresh snow with helping officers nab a break-in suspect. Officers tracked fresh footprints in the snow to nab John Turpin, 31, who faces a number of charges including break and enter.

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Russia approves new amnesty bill

Protesters. The bill could apply to Greenpeace activists and the two jailed members of the Pussy Riot punk band

Greenpeace International activists Philip Ball, left, from Britain, and Camila Speziale, of Argentina, embrace after hearing the Russian parliament passed an amnesty that would likely pardon them, in St. Petersburg, Russia, on Wednesday. DMITRI SHAROMOV/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS/GREENPEACE INTERNATIONAL

Russia's parliament on Wednesday passed an amnesty bill that will likely apply to the 30-member crew of a Greenpeace ship detained after an Arctic protest, but it wasn't immediately clear if and when the activists, including two Canadians, would be allowed to leave the country.

A spokesman for Greenpeace said the organization had hoped Paul Ruzycki of Port Colborne, Ont., and Alexandre Paul of Montreal and 28 other activists could return home by Christmas, but that seems unlikely given the amount of red tape surrounding their release.

At the earliest, they may make it in time to ring in the new year, Diego Creimer told The Canadian Press.

The amnesty, which also would likely free the two jailed members of the Pussy Riot punk band, has been largely viewed as the Kremlin's attempt to soothe criticism of Russia's human rights records ahead of the Winter Olympics in Sochi next year. But opposition lawmakers argued it doesn't go nearly far enough and the complicated legislation appeared to leave many questions open.

The State Duma on Wednesday voted 446-0 in favour of the carefully tailored bill, which mostly applies to those who haven't committed violent crimes, first-time offenders, minors and women with small children. Lawmakers said they expect about 2,000 people to be released from jail.

The Duma adopted last-minute amendments to the bill to include suspects of hooliganism who are still awaiting trial, a provision that could apply to the crew of a Greenpeace ship facing those charges after their September's protest in the Arctic.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Still in limbo

Family 'cautiously optimistic'

The sister of one of two Canadian Greenpeace activists facing charges in Russia says she's "cautiously optimistic" that an amnesty bill passed Wednesday in Moscow will apply to them.

Patricia Ruzycki Stirling said the news brought some relief from the anxiety that has plagued her family for months, but the tight-knit clan won't celebrate until Paul Ruzycki is back on Canadian soil. When he does arrive, however, his entire hometown will welcome him back with a massive party, she said.

"All he said was, 'We've been on this roller-coaster before,'" she told The Canadian Press. "He said, 'Things look good but please don't get all your hopes up until I call you and say I've signed my papers and we're headed to the airport,'" she said.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Romania. Officials accused of taking bribes for giving tips on corpses

Some 26 Romanian police officers and ambulance employees have been charged with calling undertakers to tell them that someone had died — or in some cases were not yet dead — in exchange for money.

Officials say the suspects called funeral parlour managers about people who had died in car accidents or collapsed on the street.

Prosecutor Corina Paraschivescu told The Associated Press on Wednesday that 26 officials, 10 of them police officers, had been charged. Six of them were under arrest for about a month because they were considered "a social danger." Local Romanian media reported that officials got up to 170 euros ($235) for information on a fresh corpse. Police earn between 600 euros and 2,100 euros a month.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Ukraine. PM promises financial stability after Moscow deal

Ukraine's leadership on Wednesday praised a Russia-financed bailout as a guarantee of financial stability, while opposition activists claimed the deal is likely to worsen economic troubles.

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday pledged to buy $15 billion worth of Ukrainian bonds and sharply cut the price of natural gas in an effort to relieve political pressure on Ukraine's embattled president, Viktor Yanukovych.

Prime Minister Mykola Azarov told a Cabinet meeting that the deal with Russia ensures "people's confidence in a stable life," while an association agreement with Europe would have given Ukraine a "New Year's present" of "bankruptcy and social collapse."

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Ethnic violence kills 500 in four days as South Sudan crisis grows

Worries of looming civil war. UN chief calls for urgent solution as 20,000 forced to seek refuge

At least 500 people, most of them soldiers, have been killed in South Sudan since Sunday, a senior government official said, as an ethnic rivalry threatened to tear apart the world's newest country.

The clashes apparently are pitting soldiers from the majority Dinka tribe of President Salva Kiir against those from ousted Vice-President Riek Machar's Nuer ethnic group, raising concerns the violence could degenerate into a civil war.

Fighting spread on Wednesday to Jonglei, the largest state in South Sudan, where troops loyal to Machar were said to be trying to take control of Bor, the state capital.

Machar himself is the subject of a manhunt by the country's military after he was identified by Kiir as the leader of an alleged coup attempt on Sunday. Machar has denied he was behind any coup attempt.

Barnaba Marial Benjamin, the foreign minister, told The Associated Press late Wednesday that there was heavy fighting in Bor, but he denied renegade soldiers had overtaken it.

At least 19 civilians have been killed in violence in Bor, said Martin Nesirky, a spokesman for the UN secretary-general's office, citing figures from the South Sudan Red Cross.

UN chief Ban Ki-moon told reporters Wednesday that South Sudan was experiencing a political crisis that "urgently needs to be dealt with through political dialogue."

Ban said he urged Kiir "to resume dialogue with the political opposition."

South Sudan has been plagued by ethnic violence since it peacefully broke away from Sudan in 2011 after decades of civil war.

The violence has forced about 20,000 people to seek refuge at UN facilities in Juba since Sunday.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Civilians arrive at the UN mission in Juba, South Sudan, to take refuge on Tuesday. A political crisis has since Sunday turned into ethnic violence resulting in the deaths of 500 and the displacement of 20,000. ROLLA HINEDI/UNMISS/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Analysis

Breakout still unclear

Casie Copeland, the South Sudan analyst for the International Crisis Group who is in Juba, said key Nuer leaders in the army were defecting in Jonglei but that "events that led to Sunday's fighting remain unclear."

Toby Lanzer, the U.N.'s humanitarian coordinator in South Sudan, said in a Twitter post that thousands of civilians in Jonglei had sought refuge at a U.N. facility there.

On Tuesday the United States ordered its citizens to leave South Sudan immediately.

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Morsi charged with terrorism wave plot

New trial. Ousted Egypt president could face death penalty ahead of constitution referendum

Egyptian prosecutors on Wednesday announced a new trial of ousted President Mohammed Morsi and the top leaders of his Muslim Brotherhood, accusing them of conspiring with Hamas, Hezbollah, Iran's Revolutionary Guard and militant groups to carry out a wave of terrorism to destabilize the country.

The charges, which carry a potential death penalty, are the most sweeping and heaviest accusations yet in a series of trials against the Brotherhood. The new trial of Morsi, the three top Brotherhood leaders and 32 other defendants appeared aimed at crippling the top echelons of the group and further tarnishing the Brotherhood among the public ahead of a key January referendum on a new constitution.

The new military-backed government is seeking a strong "yes" vote for the constitution to show the legitimacy of the process put in place after the military removed Morsi on July 3. Brotherhood supporters oppose the new document and have vowed protests against it.

Since the coup, prompted by massive protests calling for Morsi's removal, Egypt has been in continual unrest. Morsi supporters have been holding near daily protests demanding his reinstatement, met by a fierce security crackdown that has killed hundreds of people and arrested thousands of Brotherhood members. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Ousted Egyptian president Mohammed Morsi after a news conference in Cairo in July, 2012. MAYA ALLERUZZO/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE

Snowden seeking refuge in Brazil. Baird says NSA informer should surrender

National Security Agency leaker Edward Snowden should abandon his bid for asylum in Brazil and surrender himself to the United States, Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird said Wednesday.

Baird told The Canadian Press that Snowden's actions have compromised global security.

The U.S. wants to prosecute Snowden, who was granted temporary asylum in Russia. The move angered the Obama administration and has chilled relations between Moscow and Washington.

"I think he should go back to the United States and face the consequences of his actions," Baird said when asked about Snowden's outreach to the Brazilian government this week.

Snowden's cache of documents showed that Brazil was a prime target of the NSA in Latin America. It also suggests Canada's spying agency once monitored Brazil's mines and energy department and helped the U.S. and Britain spy on participants at the London G20 summit in 2009.

In an open letter earlier this week, Snowden praised Brazil for standing up to the U.S. for spying on the country.

Snowden's temporary asylum in Russia is to expire in August.

The Brazilian government has not given any signs of having a plan to take Snowden in. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Give it up

"I think he should go back to the United States and face the consequences of his actions."

John Baird, Canada's foreign affairs minister, speaking about Edward Snowden's recent move to reach out to the government of Brazil for asylum.

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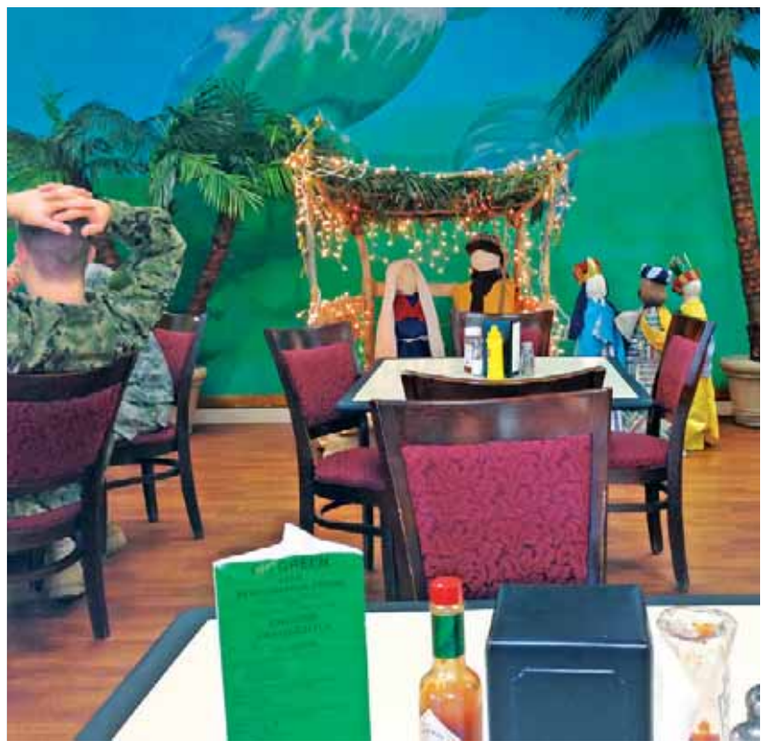

Not a merry Christmas at Gitmo's cafeteria

A group of 18 troops at Guantanamo Bay want the U.S. Navy to remove nativity scenes and Christmas decorations from two base dining facilities, an organization that advocates for religious freedom in the military said Wednesday. The troops, most of whom are Protestant or Catholic, contacted the Military Religious Freedom Foundation fearing retaliation from their superiors, but saying the decorations give the impression "that one faith is better than others" and that the U.S. military is promoting Christianity. BEN FOX/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Another blow for Bitcoin.
China exchange says it's no longer accepting yuan

The biggest Bitcoin exchange in China said Wednesday that it's no longer accepting yuan deposits, dealing another setback to the virtual currency.

BTC China's announcement on its Twitter-like Sina Weibo account comes two weeks after China's central bank said the country's banks and payments systems were barred from handling the virtual currency.

The exchange said that "due to the reasons that everyone knows, BTC China has to temporarily stop its yuan account recharging functions." THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Central bank warning

- The Chinese central bank warned earlier this month that Bitcoins don't have any legal status or monetary equivalent and shouldn't be used as currency, adding that financial institutions and payment systems could not sell, trade or store Bitcoins.

Outcry creates change

German town strips Hitler of citizenship

A Bavarian town council has voted unanimously to strip Adolf Hitler of honorary citizenship bestowed 80 years ago, after an outcry prompted by their decision last week not to adopt a resolution denouncing the 1933 decision.

The issue came up after an archivist discovered documents showing both Hitler and the president who appointed him, Paul von Hindenburg, had been given honorary citizenship of Dietramszell.
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

India swept with outrage over diplomat's treatment

Devyani Khobragade, India's deputy consul general in New York, at a fund raising event in New York last week. Prosecutors say Khobragade claimed on visa application documents she paid her Indian maid $4,500 US per month, but that she actually paid her less than $3 per hour. She plans to challenge the arrest. MOHAMMED JAFFER/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

N.Y.C. Relations with the U.S. now heated after Indian diplomat arrested and strip searched

An Indian diplomat said U.S. authorities subjected her to a strip search, cavity search and DNA swabbing following her arrest on visa charges in New York City, despite her "incessant assertions of immunity."

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh described the diplomat's treatment as "deplorable."

The case has sparked widespread outrage in India and infuriated the government, which revoked privileges for U.S. diplomats to protest her treatment. It has cast a pall over India-U.S. relations, which have cooled in recent years despite a 2008 nuclear deal that was hailed as a high point in the nations' ties.

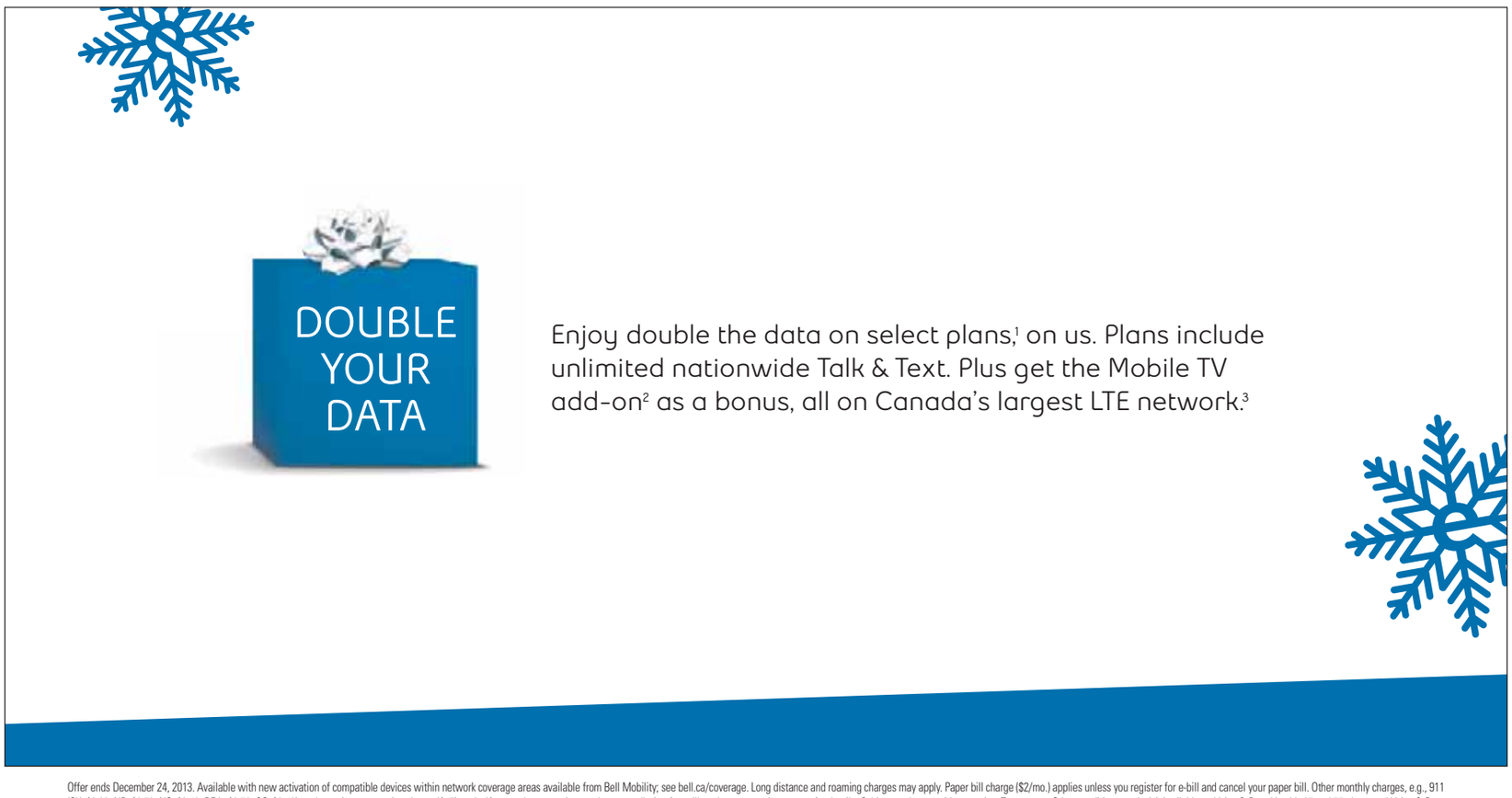
Devyani Khobragade, India's deputy consul general in New York, was arrested Thursday outside of her daughter's Manhattan school on charges that she lied on a visa application about how much she paid her housekeeper.

Prosecutors say the maid received less than $3 per hour for her work. Khobragade has pleaded not guilty.
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

She says

"I broke down many times as the indignities of repeated handcuffing, stripping and cavity searches, swabbing, in a holdup with common criminals and drug addicts were all being imposed upon me despite my incessant assertions of immunity."

Devyani Khobragade, India's deputy consul general in New York, in an email describing her treatment.



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Ronnie Biggs, one of Britain's most notorious criminals, poses with lingerie models in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in this 2001 photo. Biggs, known for his role in the 1963 Great Train Robbery, died Wednesday. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Britain's Great Train Robber dies, age 84

Ronnie Biggs. On the run for 35 years, he voluntarily returned to England in 2001

Ronnie Biggs was a petty criminal in Britain who set out to transform his life with the daring heist of a mail train packed with money.

The plan worked in ways he could never have imagined.

Biggs was part of a gang of at least 12 men that robbed a Glasgow-to-London Royal Mail train in the early hours of Aug. 8, 1963, switching its signals and tricking the driver into stopping in the darkness. The robbery netted 125 sacks of banknotes worth 2.6 million pounds — $7.3 million US at the time, or more than $50 million US today — and became known as "the heist of the century."

Biggs was soon caught and jailed, but his escape from a London prison and decades on the run turned him into a media sensation and something of a notorious British folk hero.

He lived for many years beyond the reach of British justice in Rio de Janeiro, where he would regale tourists and the media alike with stories about the robbery. He appeared to enjoy thumbing his nose at the British authorities and even sold T-shirts and other memorabilia about his role in the robbery.

Biggs died Wednesday, aged 84, daughter-in-law Veronica Biggs said. He had been released from prison on Aug. 7, 2009, a day before his 80th birthday, on compassionate grounds because of ill health — he had suffered several strokes. He had been living in a nursing home since.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Family

In 2002, Ronnie Biggs married Raimunda Rothen, the mother of his son Michael.

- They survive him, as do two children, Chris and Farley, from his first marriage to Charmian Brent.
- A third son, Nicholas, died in a crash in 1971.

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Shopping

U.S. holiday sales falling short

Sparse crowds at malls and "50 per cent off" signs at the Gap, Ann Taylor and other stores give a clue as to how the U.S. holiday season is going.

This is shaping up to be the most discount-driven holiday season since the country was in a deep recession. It's also one of the most disappointing for stores.

Sales are up two per cent to $176.7 billion US from the start of the season on Nov. 1 through Sunday, according to data obtained by The Associated Press.

The modest growth comes as the amount of discounts that stores are offering this season is up 13 per cent from last year — the highest level since 2008, according to BMO Capital Markets, which tracks 20 clothing stores.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Deliveries

FedEx CEO sees limited impact for drones

The CEO of FedEx doesn't see drones taking over the package delivery business anytime soon.

Fred Smith says FedEx has several drone studies underway. But the idea of delivering items by drone is "almost amusing," Smith said on a conference call on Wednesday.

Jeff Bezos, the CEO of Amazon.com, caused a stir recently when he said Amazon is exploring drone deliveries, and that sending a small package via an automated drone could be reality in a few years.

There are obstacles to residential drone deliveries. The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration barred their use for commercial purposes in 2007. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The Elf on the Shelf balloon makes its way through New York's Columbus Circle

TINA FINEBERG/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Elf is part and part

Elf on the Shelf.
Burgeoning holiday tradition has parents scrambling to keep Santa's little spy on the move

Carly Kerby, a mom of four girls, doesn't have the greatest track record as the Tooth Fairy, but it was another family tradition that nearly did her in: The Elf on the Shelf.

In case you've been hitting the eggnog a little too hard all these years, the elf is a big seller. It involves a picture book and a stuffed, felt elf that serves as a scout for Santa and has to be moved stealthily every night, traditionally around Thanksgiving until Christmas Eve.

The elf's mission? To report back to the boss in red on who's been naughty or nice. After eight years on the market, more than six million of the kits have been sold, and it has climbed high on bestseller lists, with two sexes and different skin tones now available.

Kerby, in Salt Lake City, thought it sounded like fun when she took it on last Christmas.

"My first epic mistake was not knowing that a female elf existed," she said. "My daughters were devastated that their elf was a boy and not a girl. Heaven forbid we have anything boy-related in our house. It went downhill from there."

She forgot to move it for days and days. And her youngest, at 18 months, loves to grab it King Kong-style, a no-no by elf rules.

"Everyone here freaks out because they read the book and it says if you touch it the magic is gone," Kerby said. "It really creates a lot of drama."

While, clearly, millions of people enjoy their elves on shelves, a backlash has bubbled up. There are anti-elf rants on Facebook and raunchy, bawdy and bloody visuals on Tumblr and Instagram. One photo circulating shows a green Grinch hat tied to the head of a large dog with one of those damning cardboard signs around his neck that reads: "I ate your Elf on the Shelf."

The Elf on the Shelf — you get to name it — was born in 2005 as a self-published labour of love from Carol Aebersold and daughters Chanda Bell and Christa Pitts.

Kim Boerman in Charleston, S.C., has pulled hard elf duty with her 12-year-old daughter. There was the time it barely escaped their German shepherd, Myka, and another time it fell from the chandelier during dinner as it hung up-

during the 86th annual Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade in 2012 in New York.

helper headache

This Dec. 11 photo released by Kim Boerman shows a bandaged elf from the Elf on the Shelf with a prescription by the Christmas tree in the Boerman home in Charleston, S.C. Boerman procured a doctor's prescription after the elf fell from the chandelier during dinner. KIM BOERMAN/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

side down.

She procured a doctor's prescription that states: "To Elf, address North Pole. Doctor's orders: Take it easy, don't move around a lot ... rest!" Boerman and her husband even threw in a head bandage for the little guy before planting him under their Christmas tree with a toy ambulance for the duration.

Kerby said she had tons on her holiday to-do list before adding the elf, but mishaps aside, "it's quite fun for our little girl and a nice tradition."

Meaghan B. Murphy isn't ho-ho-hoing. As deputy editor of Self magazine, the busy and tired mom of three kids is on elf duty with her husband.

"The elf is the bane of my December," she said. "Her name is Arielle. She wears a Target-exclusive sparkly tutu that cost like 15 bucks. She has two. I can barely remember to brush my teeth, let alone hide her nightly or do an outfit change."

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Canada Post needs to get with the times: CEO

Just as what it delivers is changing dramatically, Canada Post must make difficult changes to keep pace in the digital world, the head of the Crown agency told a Commons committee Wednesday.

In defending the corporation's proposed service cuts and price hikes, Canada Post CEO Deepak Chopra told the Commons transport committee the changes are necessary for the carrier to survive.

"If the mail is changing its shape and size, don't we think the mailbox should change its shape and size too?" Chopra asked.

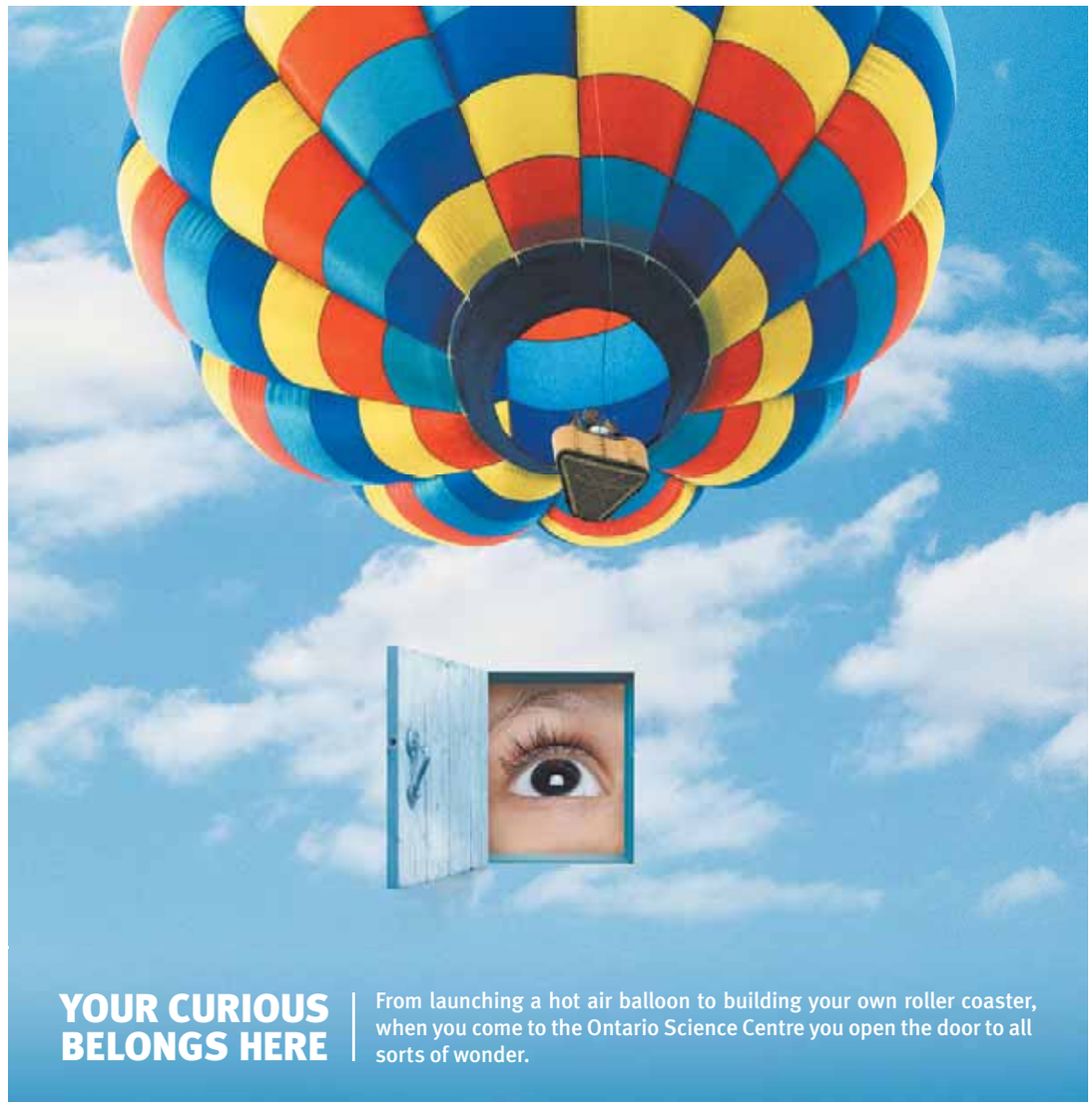
"So what we're trying to do is adapt (to) the changing needs of Canadians."

It was the first time Chopra spoke publicly since the announcement last Wednesday that Canada Post plans to phase out door-to-door mail delivery in urban centres over a five-year period.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Canada Post CEO Deepak Chopra is seen before appearing as a witness at an emergency session of a House of Commons committee on Wednesday.

ADRIAN WYLD/THE CANADIAN PRESS



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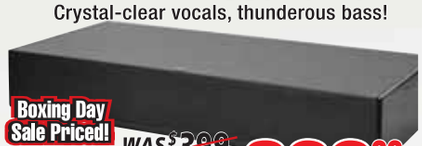

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Feds level out wireless playing field

David and Goliath.
Ottawa making the Big 3 play nice with smaller competitors

Canada's biggest telecom companies will be forced to renegotiate roaming rates they charge small rivals for using their networks as the federal government acts to create more competition in the telecom business.

Industry Minister James Moore said Wednesday that Ottawa is making legislative changes to prevent Rogers, Bell and Telus from making it difficult for new wireless players in the market.

"We just think the status quo is not good enough," Moore said in an interview from Ottawa.

"It's a nagging irritant to greater competition in the industry and we're fixing it," he said.

Ottawa will prevent the big wireless providers from charging small wireless companies more than they charge their own customers for domestic roaming.

Moore said the rates "can be more than 10 times what they charge their own customers."

The minister noted the government isn't regulating the price of roaming agreements, but added that Rogers, Bell and Telus can't make it impossible for new wireless companies to compete on price or take away their ability to invest in their networks. THE CANADIAN PRESS

The not-so-invisible hand

Industry Minister James Moore also said he still thinks it's possible to have a fourth wireless player in every region of the country, the government's aim in the Jan. 14 auction of wireless spectrum — the radio waves needed to operate cellphone networks.

Getting fourth players off the bench

"We do have fourth players in many markets of this country, but they're regional and not national. I think more competition can be realized."
Industry Minister James Moore

You spin me right 'round

Assaf Biderman, co-inventor of the Copenhagen Wheel and associate director of the SENSEable City Laboratory at MIT, poses with his invention at Superpedestrian, his venture-backed company in Cambridge, Mass. The startup is launching a new device that transforms almost any bicycle into an electric-hybrid vehicle using an app on a smartphone. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Market Minute

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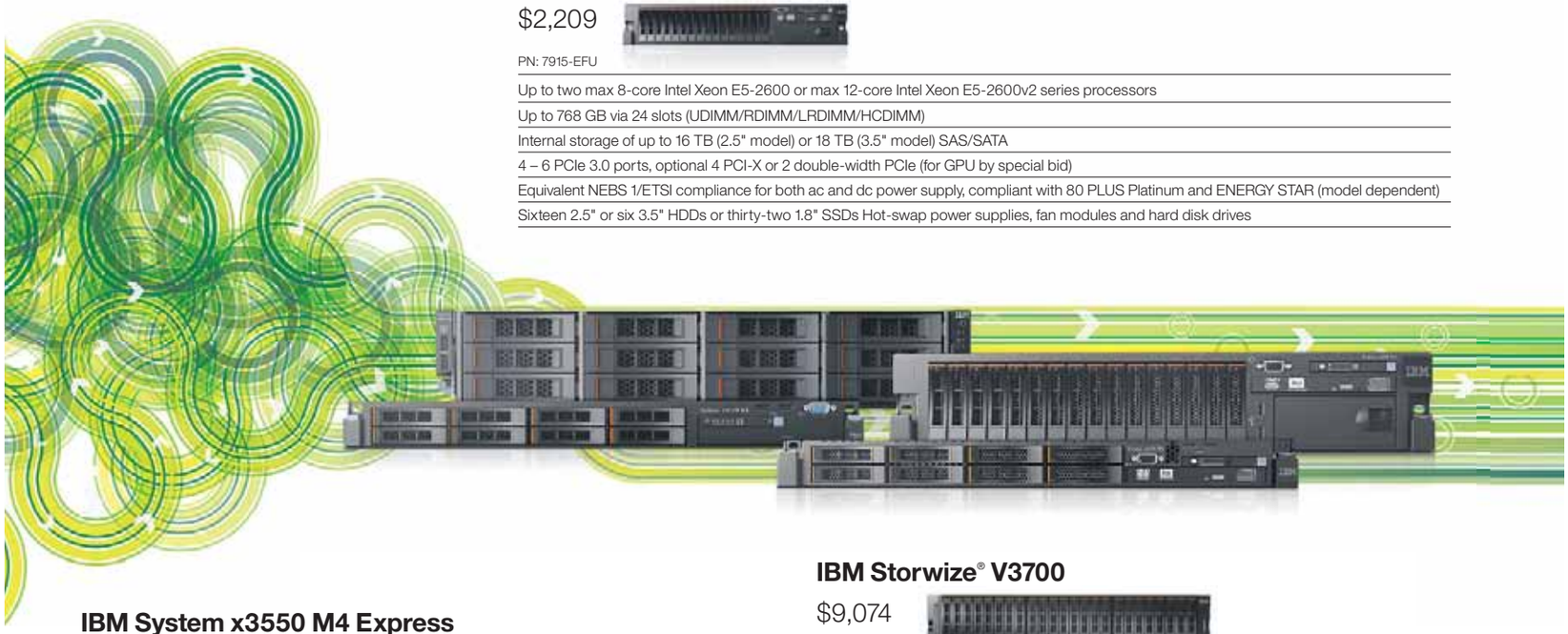

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TURKEY TROUBLE? LET'S TALK

HE SAYS

John Mazerolle
metronews.ca

I think I've finally found my calling — specifically, my turkey calling.

This holiday season, millions of Canadians from coast to coast will spend hours on the painstaking preparation of their Christmas turkey. And I want to take them under my wing.

You probably don't realize this, but I have been certified as the best Metro columnist/turkey preparer who uses my keyboard. And it's not often you hear those sorts of qualifications. In fact, family members and co-workers alike have long said that when they think "turkey" they think "John Mazerolle."

I owe my love and intimate knowledge of turkey to the Internet. Namely, butterball.com, which I can say without hyperbole is the best turkey preparation website I have ever seen this week while preparing for a column that is due in less than an hour.

Butterball's set-up is really something. Did you know they've had a 1-800 talk-line for decades that people can call if they're having turkey trouble?

You call and "turkey experts" help you with what one recent television news report called "your turkey crisis." This is fabulous. I can't count the number of times some turkey-related event has cropped up in my life and I acted like a bird-brain — my prom night/pet turkey "incident," just for starters. And help was only a phone call away.

"Open every November and December, our 50+ experts answer more than 100,000 questions, in both English and Spanish, for thousands of households around the United States and Canada," the website chirps.

What's more, the turkey talk-line call centre even added something special this year for the very first time: Men.

This is where my calling comes in: I want to talk turkey. As a certified turkey expert, I would like be part of this important and trailblazing team.

For instance, I could explain to guys like me the importance of making sure the bird is not past its best-before date. (In my 20s I had several turkeys I received as Christmas bonuses ruined by two years in the freezer. When the third turkey arrived, the two-year-old bird would get the boot.)

I also believe I could help with the efficiency of those 100,000-plus calls. I can assure you that by about the 300th time I was asked where the meat thermometer goes, I would have several alternative answers at the ready.

Without being sexist, I think I can say men deal with problems in their own special way. I'm sure the women giving thoughtful, detailed instructions over the phone will appreciate the counterpoint of me barking, "What do you mean it won't fit, force it!" and "It's fiiine, I'm sure it's fiiine. It's probably fine."

I must admit, also, that I like the idea of joining this flock because I assume all-you-can-eat turkey is a job perk. Which will be great for me, because despite my credentials and intimate knowledge of turkey, I've never actually cooked one successfully. White and dark meat, please. And cranberries if you've got them. Gobble gobble.

ZOOM

Glow with the flow

JULIA CUMES/SOLENT NEWS

LED lights added to paddle boards

The dark silhouettes of moonlit paddlers appear to be walking on water. The stand-up paddle boarding enthusiasts took to the water with specially-made LED lights strapped to the bottom of their boards. The surreal image captures the moment Justin Labdon and his team of paddle boarders headed out of a harbour in Dennis, Mass., one night.
METRO

Quoted

"Standing on the jetty photographing down, what I saw was even more beautiful and surreal than I was expecting."

Julia Cumes, 41, photographer based in Cape Cod, Mass.

Sea life attracted to board lights

The LED lights strapped to the bottom of the boards attract fish, including squid, blue fish and big striped bass, says Justin Labdon, owner of Adventure Chatham. Asked by Metro whether the light would entice larger predatory sea life, Labdon replied, "We don't venture out to shark-inhabited areas, but I would assume they might be attracted to the light as well." **METRO**

LED water sports

- $300 per LED-lit paddle board.
- AdventureChatham offers night-time paddle boarding excursions when there is a full moon out.
- Paddles with LED lights at the end are being considered as his company's next novelty water sports experience, says Labdon.

Clickbait

IRENE KUAN
irene.kuan@metronews.ca

GETTY IMAGES

If you've yet to complete your Christmas shopping by now, then you're in for a wild ride — looking for a parking spot at the mall that is. A congested parking lot full of drivers with short fuses can turn into a real-life nightmare before Christmas. These apps will make looking for a parking spot the least of your worries during the busy shopping season.

Parkopedia:

This app works on all mobile platforms and is like Wikipedia for parking spaces. The creators have set out to map every parking lot and parking space in the world and so far has data, contributed by users, from 28 countries, covering over 25 million parking spots. The app can give directions to the parking space; provide real-time availability, and prices and payment options for parking.

ParkMe:

ParkMe is an award-winning free app for iOS and Android that works to help you find the cheapest and closest parking spaces by providing the cost of parking before you arrive at your destination and lets you compare options. This app works in the U.S., Canada and in European cities.

Twitter

@metropicks asked: Calgary cabbies are eyeing a puke penalty to cover the cleanup cost. What is a sufficient penalty for puking in a cab?

@Cory_Boehm: A minimum of $200 seems more than reasonable.

@Canucklehead_ca: So drunk you puke in a cab? I suspect the next morning will present it's own penalty. Maybe two if you have an unknown guest.

@ryanjordandyck: can we get back to the real cab issue? Horrible customer service and lack of accountability? #yyc

@DeafPoet5: I dispatch at an Edmonton company. The going rate for screaming groceries is about $75, depending on how vile the mess is.

@jpmacnab: I think it is $ 50 in Ottawa

@santanapoptarts: barf bags extra large size and $10 keep it real, but the puker must realize its gross and ur in a cab #poordriver

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Rocking out and fighting hunger

Holiday Revue.
Concert to raise food bank funds helps the Wooden Sky work their creative chops

BACKSTAGE PASS
Ian Gormely
scene@metronews.ca

The Wooden Sky perform their Holiday Revue on Dec. 29 at 918 Bathurst with all proceeds going to the Daily Bread Food Bank. CONTRIBUTED JUSTIN BROADBENT

It took the gruelling grind of touring to convince Toronto roots-rockers The Wooden Sky that there had to be another way to bring their music to the people. Four years later, their annual charity Holiday Revue show is becoming a local tradition.

"It was our first year of touring, playing rock clubs," recalls singer-guitarist Gavin Gardiner. It was 2010 and the band were burnt out from promotional duties for their album, If I Don't Come Home You'll Know I'm Gone.

"Creative people focus a lot of energy on themselves and what they're creating," he says. The band were ready to do something for someone else.

The idea of a holiday charity show was floated — Gardiner can't remember who suggested it — and as the tour dragged on the group began fleshing out the details. "It was an idea to keep us warm and give us something to talk about."

The first Revue was held at the Music Gallery that December with all proceeds donated to the Daily Bread Food Bank. "It seemed like a good thing to support especially at this time of year."

While the Revues have allowed the band to focus their creative energies outside of the nucleus of the five-person group, the more intimate environs (this year the Revue is at 918 Bathurst, a 250-seat venue) allow The Wooden Sky to present a different side of their music.

Still, the shows have raised $6,000 over three years, even if Gardiner remains modest about their accomplishments.

"I don't think the money we're raising is changing people's lives," he says. Not so, says Daily Bread Food Bank executive director Gail Nyberg.

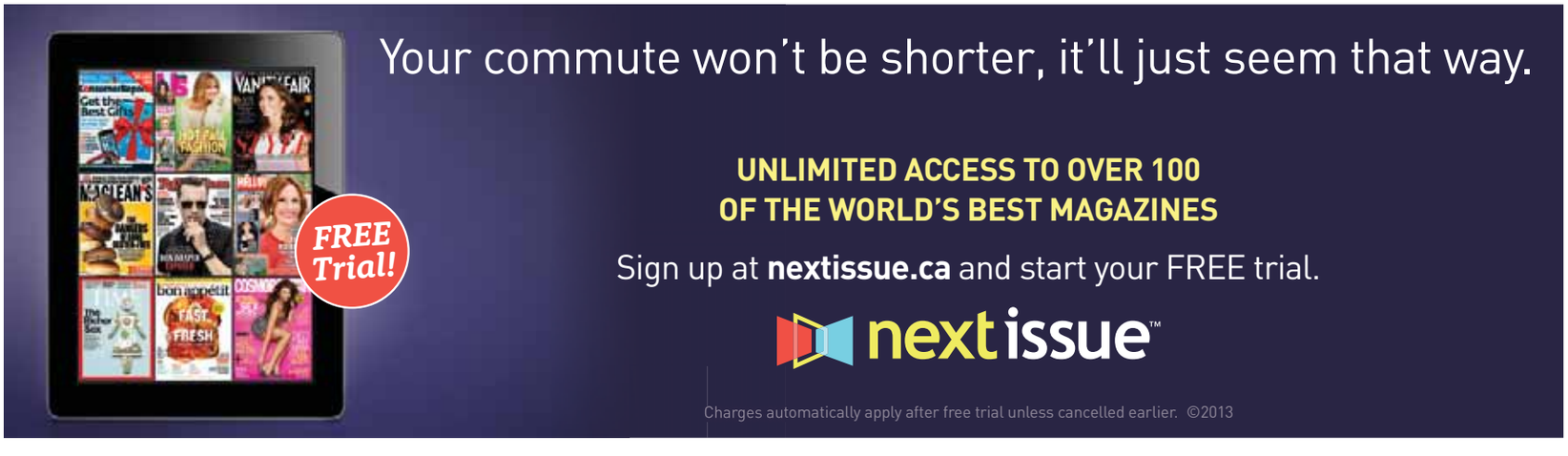
"For every dollar donated, we distribute five dollars worth of food," she says, meaning that the band have helped the group distribute $30,000 in goods. "That's pretty good for one little band."

The Wooden Sky Holiday Revue — December 29, 918 Bathurst. $20 with all proceeds going to the Daily Bread Food Bank.

About the Daily Bread Food Bank

The Daily Bread Food Bank differs from what most people think of when they imagine a food bank. It's a distribution centre for 170 agencies and over 200 programs across the GTA. These agencies and programs register with the organization that doles out food based on the number of people each group serves. "They're people just like you and I," says Nyberg of their member groups' clientele. "They can't make ends meet."

This year, their goal is to raise $2.5 million and one million pounds of food by year's end.



Tom Selleck stars in Blue Bloods HANDOUT

Selleck and his super 'stache leading the Blue Bloods clan

Iconic. Despite the Three Men and a Baby star wanting a fresh, 'stache-less start, the network asked him to keep his famous lip hair for his role as NYC police commissioner

MICHELLE CASTILLO
Metro World News

In order to play a realistic member of the New York Police Department, you have to do your research. Just ask Tom Selleck, who plays NYPD police commissioner Frank Reagan in Blue Bloods.

"I said, I'm not sure where there is regulations for the New York City police commissioner to have a moustache. It would be nice to do a character kind of with a fresh start. He (executive producer Leonard Goldberg) said that's a good idea," Selleck recalled. Alas, there are some iconic things that just can't be done away with, even if duty calls. "Now I said, I just have a hunch you better run it by the network before you get real enthused about that," Selleck continued. "It lasted about half a day, that idea. And they said, No, we want the moustache.'"

It can't be helped that the moustache makes the man. Selleck portrays the head of the Reagan clan with such authority that it is clear that the other stars respect and fear him even if he isn't their own father.

"The word icon, a lot of times people use it in where it doesn't always apply, but I think with Tom it certainly applies, I think he is definitely an icon," Donnie Wahlberg, who portrays son and detective first grade Danny Reagan, said. "And he is a larger-than-life figure.

"He is very professional and he's always willing to share that experience in those moments,"

Choice

"It lasted about half a day, that idea. And they said, 'No, we want the mustache.'"

Actor Tom Selleck
On the network's decision on whether to keep his famous moustache or not

added Bridget Moynahan, who plays daughter and assistant district attorney Erin Reagan. "It's always very nice because he also spends a lot of time with the kids in helping them with acting and helping them recognize the quiet moments, or doing their responses."

It's clear the cast has bonded as a family unit. The actors admitted that part of what helps is the extended dinner scenes that are included in each episode. Unlike many shows with a large number of main characters, at least once every eight days the main stars gather together to film one scene. During the four to six hour shoot, the cast catches up on each other's personal lives.

"I really look forward other than the eating to family dinner because I'm going to catch up with my friends, and I think that sense really helps us," Selleck explained.

It's also taught them valuable lessons about how to create a fake family dinner.

"There was a fish recently, you can't do fish," Moynahan explained. "Fish will smell after a while, and it doesn't smell good. I had to eat a Mu Shu pork calzone one time because it was written in the script. I had to keep eating and commenting on it, and that was not good and I will never do that again."

Wahlberg pointed out that Moynahan doesn't actually eat the food. "Bridget very cleverly moves her food around and so the Bridget for example will look like this — she is slicing the meat, but she never eats it," he explained.

Noth-ing wrong with playing the bad guy

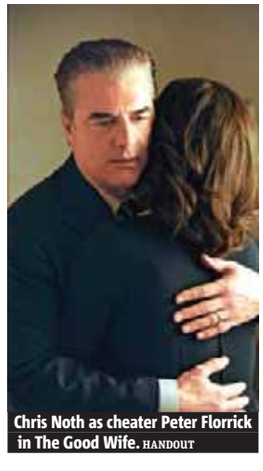
The Good Wife. Peter Florrick is no angel, just like the actor's best-known character, Sex and the City's Mr. Big

MICHELLE CASTILLO
Metro World News

No matter if he's Big from Sex and the City or Peter Florrick on The Good Wife, Chris Noth has made a career out of playing lovable cheaters.

"There's a misconception about all my characters. They're imperfect people, and they're conflicted, and they're complicated like everybody," Noth said, defending his on-screen personas. "And so I find the generalization that they're bad to be a little ridiculous."

And Peter Florrick is the baddest of the bad. On The Good Wife, the former state attorney used the state budget to hire prostitutes and had a sex tape leaked of him. His "good" wife, Alicia Florrick, is forced to testify on his behalf. The debauchery, lies and deceit get even worse as the series progresses, even though Alicia seems to trust her disgraced husband more and more — which is exactly what she shouldn't be doing, Noth explained.


Chris Noth as cheater Peter Florrick in The Good Wife. HANDOUT

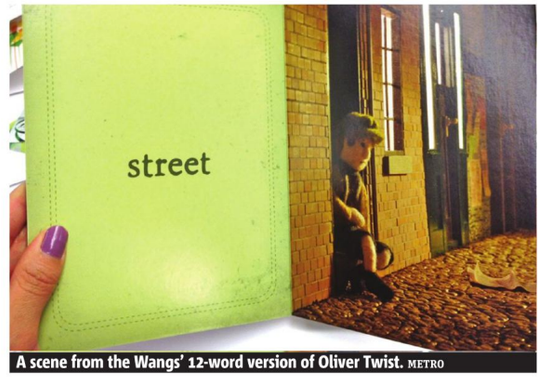
"It's possible he could get into trouble again, I just don't know where they want to take it," Noth continued. "Do they want to make it about a marriage that has pulled itself out of the depths of misery and gotten it back together? Is that interesting? I don't know; it's up to them. I think it's more fun, too — as we used to say in speech classes and exercise, 'I'm glad to be bad.'"

Despite the intricacies of Peter, Noth said he's not the character he likes to portray the most. In fact, he refuses to pick favorites.

"I can think of roles in the theatre that I love, but once I put them to bed there are no favorites," he admitted. "They are all great characters and I hope that somehow they give some semblance of satisfaction to people who watch it. But I don't think about them or compare them or — at all. It's much more simplistic than that."

SHOPPERS DRUG MART
SEE WHAT'S NEW... CHECK OUT OUR LATEST OFFER ON PAGE 44

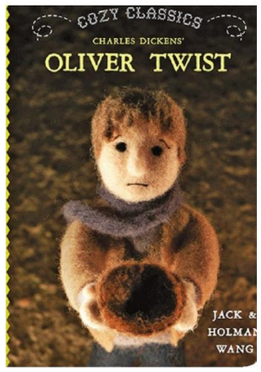
New kids' books focus on classic 12-word summary



A scene from the Wangs' 12-word version of Oliver Twist. METRO

Wang brothers. Jack decided to reinvent the great books of old, which allow parents to learn themselves and give their interpretation to their child

ANDREA PARK
Metro World News in NYC



Baby. Work. More. Street. Meet. Bad. Bed. Back. Sneak. Oh! Country. Family.

Congratulations! You just read Oliver Twist in 12 words — or at least, Jack and Holman Wang's take on it. The twin brothers are the brains behind Cozy Classics, a series of children's block books that condenses classics like Pride and Prejudice and War and Peace into just 12 words and unusual illustrations of needle felted characters. The brothers have just added Oliver Twist, Jane Eyre and Emma to their collection, and plan to release The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn and The Adventures of Tom Sawyer in the spring.

The books are a far cry from the splashy, cartoonish block books that fill up children's bookshelves. Jack Wang, who is a writing professor at Ithaca College, said he wanted something different for his daughters after reading aloud tons of insipid board books about barnyard animals. "There was something uninspired about the genre, so I asked myself, how can they be wittier, funnier, more beautiful? How can they appeal to adults as much as to kids and have a sense of narrative as well?" said Jack. "That's where I came across the idea to abridge classics." Jack enlisted his brother Holman to help him, and they decided the best way to shorten canonical works was to simply use one word per page.

Quoted

"Each book has its own set of tones and creates a different sense of place and mood. We try to basically stay true to the spirit of a particular novel."

Holman Wang

"We didn't want parents to be slaves to the text," said Holman. "We knew if we put one sentence on each page the parents would read it and then just move on. With one word, parents are free to story tell and elaborate and the books are more relevant for a longer period of time."

The Wangs pointed out that the books are so simple, parents can even read them to an infant, but the bare bones format means that the books appeal to an older audience — adult readers can project their own interpretations onto the words and scenes.

Even high schoolers are getting in on the trend.

"My high school teacher used our book as a basis for an exercise in her Advanced Placement English class," said Jack. "She asked them to present books like Madame Bovary and Catch-22 in 12 words and 12 pictures and it really challenged the student to know the story well but present the essential narrative element." Jack said he also uses the books in his own English classes at Ithaca College.

Even for the Wangs, condensing a book that is thousands of words long down to 12 words is a huge challenge. Jack said he takes the first crack at 12 words and Holman keeps him honest. "The focus is on the main narrative arc," said Jack. "You can't get into the secondary characters and secondary plots. And you can't choose any 12 words – it's not just 12 words but 12 child appropriate words."

The brothers both needle felt the characters themselves for the block books, and Holman takes photos. The books, like their predecessors, are occasionally gloomy. The Wangs argue that children's books don't always need to be cheery. "Kids are more drawn to darkness than you'd think," said Holman. "Maurice Sendak once said in an interview there's this presumption that children's books should be healthy and cheerful and upbeat and not show the little tattered edges of life, but that's all he knew and that's what he showed in his books." He added, "We're trying to get away from fluffy bunnies and pink princesses."

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McCauley turned Negativity of old into musical positivity

Deer Tick's new album. Front man channeled the frustration of his drug habit and the built-up anger over his father's jail sentence into something good

Singer John McCauley of the rock band Deer Tick figured out how to turn his pain into something positive.

McCauley used the Rhode Island-based band's latest album, Negativity, to unleash some of the frustrations and struggles he has had over the past couple of years into a polished and refined sound that mixes country, folk and rock.

His father was sentenced to prison after pleading guilty to federal charges of conspiracy and tax fraud and McCauley was struggling with substance abuse. The album includes several references to McCauley's experiences, as painful as they were. "People take comfort in knowing either A, somebody is going through something similar to what they went through or B, somebody's got it worse off than they do," McCauley said during a recent interview. "I am guilty of both of those things when I listen to music."

Now he says he's cleaned up and feeling excited about the future. McCauley and singer Vanessa Carlton are planning a wedding at the end of December, just before the band is scheduled to start a European tour.

The couple recorded a duet on the album, called In Our Time, which McCauley wrote about his own parents.

"We met through Patrick Hallahan, from My Morning Jacket. He introduced us after I went on Vanessa's Twitter and said, 'Hey, VC let's get a beer,"' McCauley said. "I had just figured out how to use Twitter so I was really proud of myself."

The band recorded the album with producer Steve Berlin, from Los Lobos, who pushed the band to focus on instrumentation and added new layers to their songs without losing the rawness that the group is known for, McCauley said.

"This is the first record that we've put out where we actually rehearsed every single song on the record, so we're actually kind of proud of this one," McCauley said. "We go out on stage every night, just a little bit more aware of our surroundings and what our equipment does than we have in the past."

John McCauley performing with his band, Deer Tick, at the Newport Folk Festival. AP PHOTO

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Ryan Tedder. Producer knew of Beyoncé release minutes before it dropped

Beyoncé's new album was so secret, one of its producers only knew of its release 90 minutes before it dropped.

Beyoncé released her self-titled album in surprise form last week. Ryan Tedder produced the single XO, and he learned about the release not long before it went public.

"I knew 90 minutes before it dropped. Ninety minutes. And I said nothing because I love Beyoncé and I don't want her to hate me," Tedder said in an interview Tuesday.

"I heard a rumour and then I didn't say anything. I told my wife, 'I think Beyoncé's album is dropping in 90 minutes,' and then I knew that XO was on the album," he said. "I knew it was a single. I didn't know if it was first or second. I didn't know anything, and then today I found out that it was the lead."

The OneRepublic frontman made the comments at the season finale of the NBC singing competition The Voice, where his band performed.

Producer Ryan Tedder. GETTY IMAGE

In just three days, "Beyoncé" sold more than 617,000 units on the U.S. iTunes Store, where it was released exclusively. The album also features collaborations with Jay Z, Justin Timberlake, Miguel, Timbaland, Pharrell and Frank Ocean. Tedder previously produced Beyoncé's Grammy-winning hit Halo.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Is this what he's been hustling for?

American Hustle.
Director David O. Russell says all his filmmaking has led up to this movie

American Hustle opens Friday. CONTRIBUTED

Given director David O. Russell's recent track record, it's no surprise expectations are high for his latest holiday release, American Hustle.

The sprawling star-packed thriller — the followup to last year's Oscar-winning crowd-pleaser Silver Linings Playbook — heads to Canadian theatres this weekend after making it onto a slew of critics' best-of-2013 lists and garnering key early awards nominations.

Russell demurs any suggestion the 1970s-set American Hustle could be on the same buzz-laden Oscar track as his 2012 feel-good romance starring Jennifer Lawrence and Bradley Cooper, or the Oscar run enjoyed by his brutal 2010 holiday release, The Fighter, with Christian Bale and Amy Adams.

But he does admit his brazen, fictionalized take on the Abscam tale marks a new career benchmark, which he credits in large part to the bonds it cements with returning players Bale, Cooper, Adams and Lawrence, each featured in radically different roles.

"They understand the world they're in and then they can all channel that dream and it allows magical things to happen.... that's what this is," Russell said in a recent interview from New York, describing his core cast as "collaborators" in his vision. "And this didn't happen to me before in my filmmaking — I feel like all my filmmaking was sort of leading up to this work."

An outlandish no-holds-barred spirit pervades the hair-obsessed, sequin-adorned world of American Hustle, where an array of hustlers scheme and plot their way to dreams of love and respect. It's loosely inspired by an actual FBI sting that netted members of Congress for accepting bribes from a fake Arab sheik, but veers in wild directions as it explores desperate people hungry for acceptance.

Bale is nearly unrecognizable as pot-bellied con man Irving Rosenfeld, who is forced to help Cooper's wild FBI agent Richie DiMaso in an increasingly reckless scheme to nab corrupt politicians and casino-skimming mobsters.

Russell says he and Bale sketched their ideas about Irving, a character inspired by a real con man named Melvin Weinberg, in Bale's backyard in Los Angeles about a year ago.

"The film is really about reinvention and survival and that was the larger idea that really interested Christian Bale and me while we were in his backyard — it was not any kind of cynical story but (rather) a very soulful story about people who loved life and loved each other but were facing some enormous predicament," he says, drawing comparisons to the conflicted characters of Silver Linings Playbook and The Fighter.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Quoted

"The film is really about reinvention and survival"

Director David O. Russell on what interested Christian Bale about this project

There are holiday flicks and then there are flicks set during the holidays.
Two very different things, each offering their own twist on all the naughty and nice things the season has to offer.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

5 Non-festive holiday flicks

In Bruges

You'd have to pay attention to realize this dark comedy actually takes place during the holiday season — the only references are casual asides and the occasional shot of Christmas decorations in the background. And the plot itself is hardly cheer-filled: It centres on two hitmen, played by Colin Farrell and Brendan Gleeson, who are sent to Belgium to lay low after an especially messy job.

The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo

This is hardly holiday fare, unless you count perverse family dysfunction as a key hallmark of your seasonal gatherings. The horrors in this dark thriller kick off several days before Dec. 25 and unfold through a bitterly cold Scandinavian winter. It centres on a dogged journalist, played by Michael Nyqvist in the 2009 Swedish-language version and Daniel Craig in the 2011 remake, who traces the decades-old disappearance of a young woman with the help of a tattooed hacker, originally played by Noomi Rapace and later by Rooney Mara.

Iron Man 3

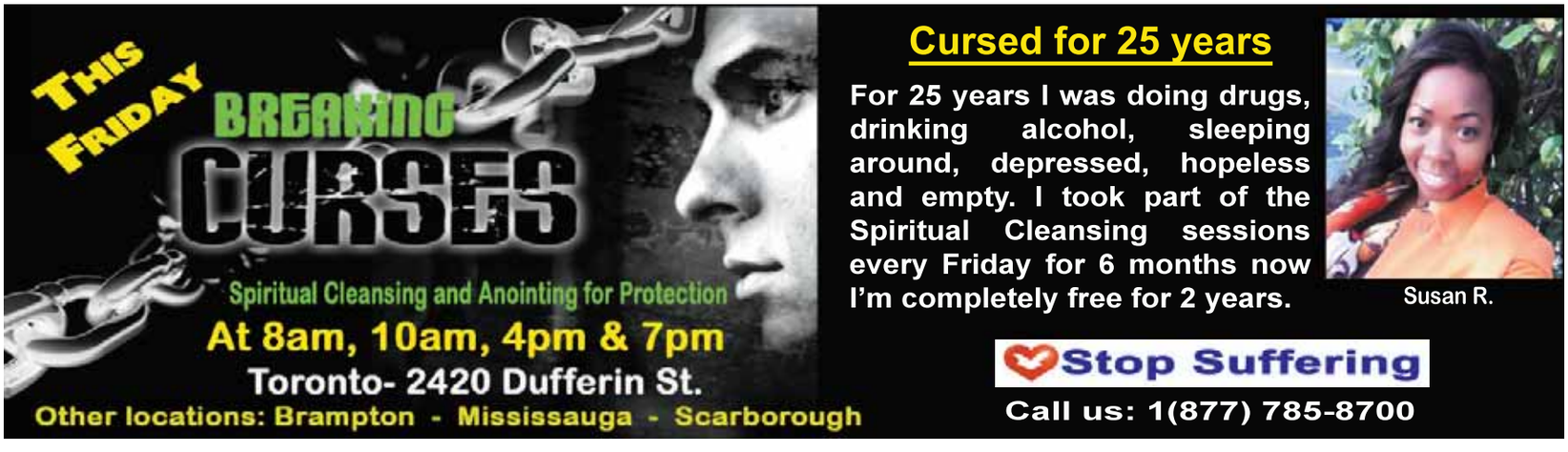
Writer/director Shane Black clearly has a thing about Christmas. Many of his flicks — including Iron Man 3 — take place during the holiday season, among them Lethal Weapon, The Last Boy Scout, The Long Kiss Goodnight and Kiss Kiss Bang Bang. There's something about a Christmas setting that ably unites varied characters and pulls together a sprawling storyline while driving home key plot points, while blowing stuff up, of course.

Goodfellas

This Martin Scorsese classic makes the cut by way of the fact it spans several decades and therefore includes a holiday-themed scene, and it is a doozy featuring Robert De Niro's trademark intensity: After a lucrative heist leaves the mobsters flush with cash, some arrive at a holiday party flaunting the spoils, sending De Niro's pragmatic Jimmy into a fury for attracting unwanted attention.

About a Boy

The holiday shmaltz sneaks up on you in this Hugh Grant romantic comedy about a self-absorbed bachelor who is more humbug than ho-ho-ho. Until he befriends a young boy and the boy's suicidal mum, of course, and gradually learns there's more to life than hook-ups and his posh hipster toys. Added holiday points come from the fact Grant's character lives on royalties from his father's song Santa's Super Sleigh.



Tyler Perry is happy he made the time to work on Gone Girl with David Fincher. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Tyler Perry takes a turn for the serious

Gone Girl. The man behind Madea says working with David Fincher was 'awe-inspiring'

Tyler Perry writes, directs, stars in and produces his own movies and TV shows, so he doesn't have much time for outside projects. One he's glad he made work is a role in director David Fincher's upcoming film Gone Girl.

Based on the bestselling novel by Gillian Flynn, Gone Girl is the story of a man who comes under suspicion in the disappearance of his wife.

The movie, scheduled for release next October, stars Ben Affleck and Rosamund Pike.

Gone Girl is "the most educational, awe-inspiring thing that I've ever done," Perry said in a recent interview.

"Sitting in his presence, in his genius, the man is a genius," he said of Fincher. "It really makes me go, 'Whoa, let me just stop and take this in,' so it's been wonderful."

And, as one filmmaker to another, he's humbled by working with the Oscar-nominated director.

"I'm a storyteller. That man is a di-rec-tor. He is amazing. And to watch him work and to watch how he paints his pictures, the tableaus, everything is really just beyond anything I could ever imagine."

Perry plays Madea, a big and boisterous grandmother he's made popular in previous movies, in Tyler Perry's A Madea Christmas, now in theatres.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Quoted

"I'm a storyteller. That man is a di-rec-tor. He is amazing."

Tyler Perry on working on Gone Girl with Oscar-nominated director David Fincher

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What do Mary Poppins, Pulp Fiction and The Right Stuff have in common?

Preserving culture.
The U.S. Library of Congress has unveiled the films they're inducting into the National Film Registry

Just in time for a new movie about the making of Mary Poppins, the 1964 Disney classic starring Julie Andrews and Dick Van Dyke has been selected for preservation at the Library of Congress so future generations of Americans can see it.

On Wednesday, the library is inducting 25 films into the National Film Registry to be preserved for their cultural, historical or cinematic significance. This year's selections include Quentin Tarantino's Pulp Fiction, the space race film The Right Stuff, and Michael Moore's documentary confronting the auto industry, Roger and Me.

Curators said it was a coincidence that they selected Mary Poppins just ahead of its 50th anniversary and during the release of the new Disney film Saving Mr. Banks, which is about the making of the movie. Steve Leggett, program co-ordinator for the library's National Film Preservation Board, said Mary Poppins had been on the short list of picks many times before.

"It's just a title that everyone has seen and recognizes, and the musical numbers and just the Julie Andrews and the shim-shim-a-ree — it's just become a real, imbued part of our culture," he said.

Mary Poppins is guaranteed to be preserved for future generations. CONTRIBUTED

The films chosen this year span from 1919 to 2002 and include Hollywood classics, documentaries, silent films, independent flicks and experimental pictures. Congress created the program in 1989 to ensure that gems from American movie history are preserved for years to come.

Some are chosen for their influence on movies that would follow, as with Pulp Fiction from 1994. The film board called it a milestone for independent cinema, and Leggett noted Tarantino's "stylized violence and kind of strangeness" in the cinematography.

Older films often become in danger of being lost, said Librarian of Congress James Billington, "so we must protect the nation's matchless film heritage and cinematic creativity."

This year's selections represent the "extreme vitality and diversity of American film heritage," Leggett said. Many illustrate American culture and society from their times, he said.

The oldest films joining the registry this year are from the silent era. They include 1920's Daughter of Dawn, which featured an all-Native-American cast of Comanche and Kiowa people, with a fictional love story and a record of Native American traditions of the time. The 1919 silent film A Virtuous Vamp, a spoof on workplace romance, made Constance Talmadge an early film star. And Ella Cinders from 1926 featured the famous actress Colleen Moore.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Ebook review

A book on Mr. Banks

MIND THE APP
Kris Abel
@RealKrisAbel
scene@metronews.ca

Saving Mr. Banks: The Official Multi-Touch Book
By Tyler Christian & Hilary Hattenbach
iBooks for iPad/Mac

Yes, it's a promotional pamphlet with profiles on Tom Hanks and Emma Thompson, but done with the added care of an expensive coffee table book. The surprising focus is on the film's inspiration, Mary Poppins, with original artwork and sheet music, audio of P.T. Travers in meetings, archival footage, and early song recordings. These are the treasures you'll cherish.

Films in danger

Earlier this month, the Library of Congress released a study that found 70 per cent of America's feature-length silent films have already been lost. Original prints of even newer movies, such as Michael Moore's Roger and Me from 1989, have become endangered. In a statement to the library, Moore said he learned last year there were no more usable prints left of his film.

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METRO DISH

OUR TAKE ON THE WORLD OF CELEBRITIES

Bruce Willis ALL IMAGES GETTY

Willis and wife expecting baby number two

Bruce Willis is reportedly set to be a father once again, with wife Emma Heming expecting the couple's second child, according to Us Weekly. Willis and Heming are also parents to one-year-old daughter Mabel, while Willis also has three daughters — Rumer, Scout and Tallulah — with ex-wife Demi Moore.

Kelly LeBrock

LeBrock arrested for driving under the influence

Weird Science star Kelly LeBrock was arrested on suspicion of driving under the influence following a routine traffic stop in Santa Barbara last month, according to E! News. The model and actress — famous for her "don't hate me because I'm beautiful" Pantene ads from the '80s — failed to stop at a stop sign and was exceeding the speed limit and straddling the double yellow line when cops pulled her over. She then reportedly failed field sobriety tests and was arrested "without incident."

The Word

Lawrence condemns fat insults

Jennifer Lawrence is going on the offensive when it comes to Hollywood's warped body image standards. "I just think it should be illegal to call somebody fat on TV," the star tells Barbara Walters in an interview. "Because why is humiliating people funny? I get it, and I do it too, we all do it. But I think when it comes to the media, the media needs to take responsibility for the effect that it has on our younger generation, on these girls who are watching these television shows and picking up how to talk and how to be cool."

Julia Roberts

Roberts did not relish a bit of rough and tumble with Streep

Surprisingly, Julia Roberts didn't relish the opportunity to tackle Meryl Streep and wrestle her to the carpet in August: Osage County, she revealed during a post-premiere Q & A. "I didn't look forward to it," Roberts says. "It's not how I saw the dream of my time with Meryl Streep. But she was a worthy opponent. She was not going down without some scratches and some heels in thighs." And while there were stunt personnel on hand to help the actresses, Roberts handled her tackling herself, apparently. "Julia didn't need a stunt double because she's plenty tough," Streep says.

Twitter

@Johncusack
So good to check back in with CNN every few years — Piers Morgan in a fiery debate with Ann Coulter whether Santa is white

@JuddApatow
When someone says there was too much marketing of Anchorman 2 I usually say 'you go up against The Hobbit without marketing. FU grandma!'

@oliviawilde
I broke into @jayleno's dressing room and stole one of his jackets for my fetus.

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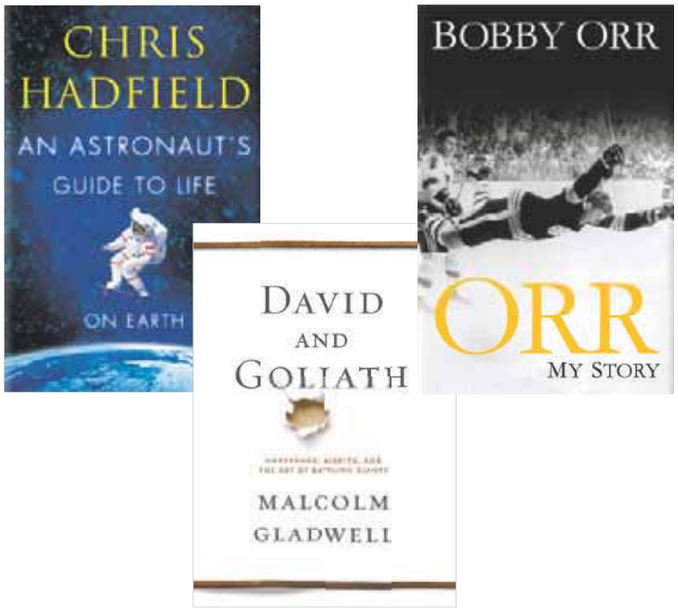

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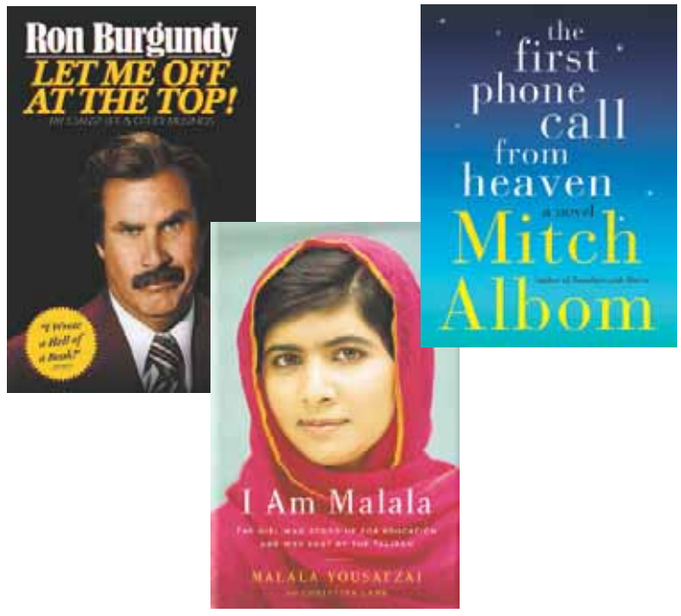

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Their style is in the stars

Forget trying to break your giftees down into the usual gift guide categories of personality type or price. We spoke to identical twin sisters Tali and Ophira Edut, a.k.a .The AstroTwins, to find out what each star sign typically desires when it comes to the season of goodwill.

METRO WORLD NEWS

Aries

"As a fire sign, Aries are very competitive, so accessories that draw attention and frame the face would be good options."

Maison Michel boater
$616,
net-a-porter.com

Taurus

"The bull likes purposeful items, like pajamas and shoes, with an understated design."

Frends Layla leather and rose gold headphones
$214, net-a-porter.com

Gemini

"They have a bit of a wacky, boho style. They're very curious and love to explore. Opt for natural fabrics and fruity fragrances."

Ilse Jacobsen lace up wellies
$164, gift-library.com

Libra

"Libras love presents that look pretty and cosmetics that feel indulgent rather than just practical."

Laura Mercier almond coconut milk honey bath
$51, john-lewis.com

Scorpio

"Scorpios love to embrace a dramatic atmosphere. They have expensive taste and love exclusives."

Elle Macpherson Intimates lace bra
$57, net-a-porter.com

Sagittarius

"They travel a lot, items that make plane rides and road trips easier or more fun would be good options."

Lotus Wei Pure Energy mist
$48, beingcontent.com

Cancer

"They have an almost grandmotherly style, which extends to their wardrobe, too."

Penhaligon's Bluebell eau de toilette
$140, penhaligons.com

Leo

"Leos are very outgoing and love to socialize, so look for gifts that have a cool and unusual pattern."

Marc by Marc Jacobs tablet case
$40.60, shopbop.com

Virgo

"Anything that encourages relaxation and sends them a subtle sign that they need to unwind"

eKO lite yoga mat
$48,
manduka.com

Capricorn

"Capricorns want good quality items with a minimalist design. "

Leather wrap gloves
$64, stories.com

Aquarius

"Anything that embraces their boho, wacky style would be warmly welcomed."

Lucy Folk silver taco bracelet
$115, matchesfashion.com

Pisces

"Pisceans adore anything mystical. Ideas include natural and precious materials to create a serene atmosphere or channeling positive vibes."

Essential oil soy wax candle
$30, bsabcandles.com

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Guess what I ended up doing? With my boy Roy! #workinit

With @KirstineStewart @Jianghomeshi @Zaib_Shaikh + @CharlesKhabouth @La_Societe after a scrumptious French feast!

Canadian street style

Spotted in: Toronto

Name: Jenny

Age: 25

Occupation: Transit employee

What she's wearing
Vintage fur jacket, G4Life sweater, Versace pants, backpack and brooch, Michael Kors watch, Bamboo booties, and gold glasses purchased off EBay.

Her inspiration
"L.A. style and my very fashionable twin sister (she is my biggest style inspiration!)"

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Online throw

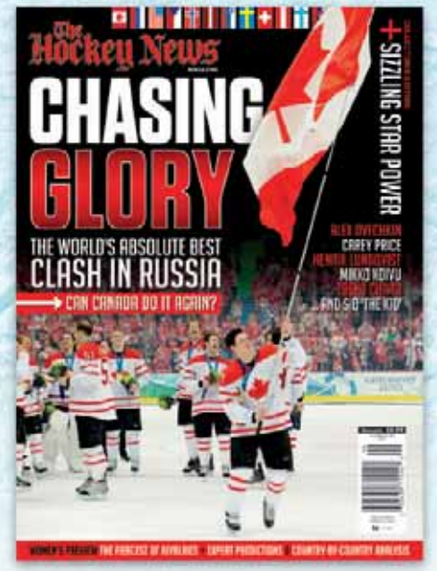
I'm obsessed with the colour rose gold this holiday season. Not as harsh as classic gold or silver, this complimentary hue is great for all skin tones. Go online to Trends Report to see the rose gold accessories and makeup I've found, and for some last minute fashion and shopping tips.

- **Online.** Follow Irene on Twitter at @MetroIreneK or Instagram: kuanirene; metronews.ca/voices/trends-report
- **Credit.** Images courtesy of Sephora (makeup), Charming Media Inc (jewellery).

Correction

The Essential Holiday Eye Palette from Clarins featured in Metro last week is not available in Canada. Metro apologizes for the error.

The Hockey News Collector's Edition,
CHASING GLORY



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No need to be bitter if the eggplant sandwiches turn out a little cheesy

Ingredients

4 portions

- 1 whole egg
- 2 tbsp water or 2% milk
- 1 cup seasoned dry bread crumbs
- 3 tbsp chopped fresh parsley
- 3 tbsp grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 tsp minced fresh garlic
- 10 slices of eggplant, skin on
- 3/4 cup tomato sauce
- 1/2 cup shredded part-skim mozzarella cheese
- 1/4 cup grated Parmesan

ROSE REISMAN
for more, visit
rosereisman.com

Eggplant, a healthy vegetable, is often loaded with fat and calories from the amount of oil used in frying or sautéing it.

This baked version omits the oil, and it turns out great! Purchase fresh young eggplant; when overripe, it becomes bitter. If the skin doesn't spring back when pressed, then it's too old.

1. Preheat the oven to 425°F (220°C). Spray a large baking sheet with cooking oil

2. Whisk the egg with the water in a small bowl. Combine the bread crumbs, parsley, Parmesan and garlic on a plate, mixing well. Dip the eggplant in the egg mixture, then coat with the bread crumb mixture. Place on the prepared pan. Bake, turning once, for 20 minutes or until tender.

3. Spread half of the tomato sauce in a large casserole dish. Place 5 eggplant slices over top. Top each with remaining tomato sauce. Add half the mozzarella cheese and top with remaining eggplant slices. Top with remaining mozzarella and Parmesan. Bake for five minutes or until the cheese is melted.

Preparation time 10 minutes
Cooking time 25 minutes

Cheesy Eggplant Sandwiches

A delicious combination of eggplant and cheese. ROSE REISMAN

Mind the App

How to make Substitutions

MIND THE APP
Kris Abel
@RealKrisAbel
life@metronews.ca

iPhone/iPad
$0.99

Holiday meals can be tricky with guests who have allergies or special needs. This handy reference will help you pick out replacement ingredients without changing recipes or abandoning family traditions.

Legal Matters

Addressing a key concern

We bought a resale condo and on closing we were provided with one fob for the front door, a key to the unit, a key for the mail and a key for the locker. There are two of us living in the unit, and we need at least an extra set of keys, but the seller returned the second set to the management office in order to get a key refund. Shouldn't the seller have provided them to us on closing?

LEGAL MATTERS
Jeffrey Cowan
home@metronews.ca

Typically, I instruct my sellers to provide access to the property and then leave all the additional keys and fobs on the kitchen counter. They may leave a key that they use to lock the unit with the concierge or management office.

If they indicate they're returning keys for the deposit I let them know that is their prerogative, but they may want to consider that they are probably receiving several hundred thousand dollars, so an extra few dollars for keys is like splitting hairs.

However, if the Agreement of Purchase and Sale indicates the specific number of keys to be provided, then I make sure they leave the correct number of items in the condo. In the case of a home, I would advise that the buyers will probably change the locks (or should) so this is not as important.

Happy holidays to all my readers!

Reflective surfaces and a bold dose of orange up the wow factor in the party room at Minto 30 Roe condos — and have a look at what's playing on the TV. CONTRIBUTED

Groovy, baby! The '60s swing again

Colour revival. Condo designers look to an iconic era for ways to add visual warmth

CONDO TRENDS
Duncan McAllister
life@metronews.ca

Ah, the swinging '60s, man. Scandinavian was in. Appliances and accessories made from Bakelite and moulded plastics were considered mod.

Space-age shapes and technology-inspired hues were reminiscent of the beat generation. Interior decor was groovy, with hanging wicker chairs, bean bag furniture, lava lamps and wild boho-psychedelic wallpapers. Retro had its tacky side as well: remember Angel Stone? Linoleum was big too.

Anyone old enough to be a child of the '60s will recall the original Yorkville, which became a thriving hot spot for Toronto's bohemian scene. Once frequented by the likes of Joni Mitchell and Neil Young, the so-called Village spawned the design trends of the time. These offbeat styles have enjoyed a revival made popular by TV shows like Mad Men and The Hour.

Edilcan's One Valhalla condominium community occupies the site of the old Valhalla Inn built in 1963. The Valhalla was a popular social centre for decades in Etobicoke, with its Mermaid Lounge bedecked with fixtures of a Nordic nautical theme. Designed by renowned Toronto architect George Robb, the interiors were done in a retro-Scandinavian style and included a carved Viking ship bar.

Edilcan intends to preserve and restore the Inn and transform it from mod to modern; a heritage restoration incorporating numerous retro elements into the three new condo towers.

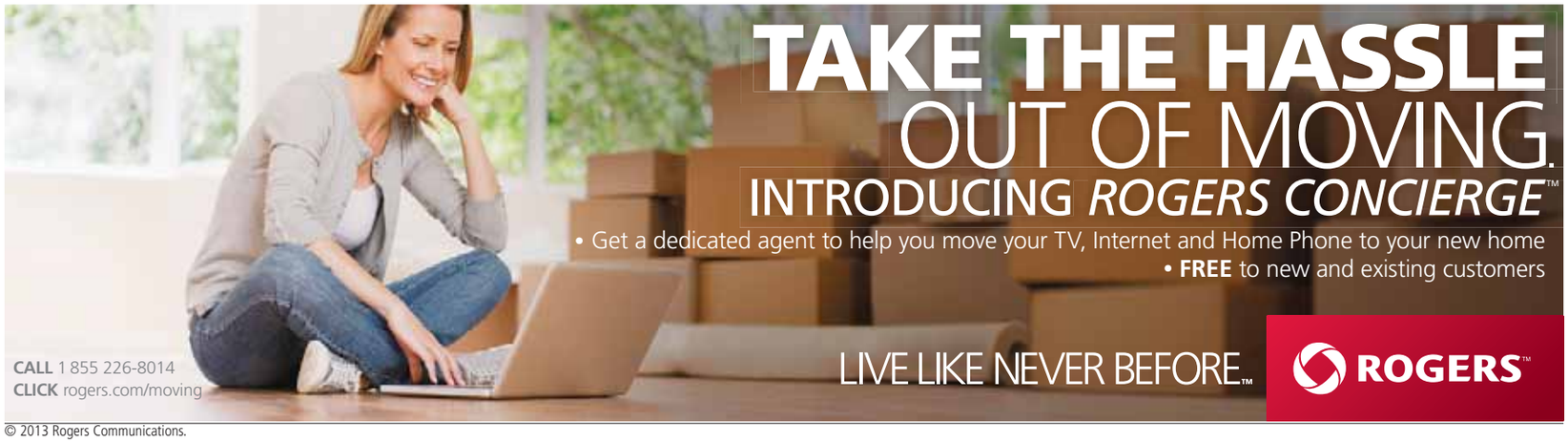
Minto's 30 Roehampton condos includes 1960s-influences packaged for the modern homeowner that Jack Kerouac might have loved. "The look is definitely meant to be forward-thinking," says Dan Menchions of II by IV Design. "We have focused on making the interiors of Minto 30 Roe a statement without being trendy."

Oranges and teals bounce off reflective surfaces against classic neutrals and jet blacks: this design uncannily hits the mark on what global colour authority Pantone has predicted to be the home interior palette of 2014.

According to Menchions, here's how to transform your plain white condo to a retro, '60s look: "Spaces used to be really simple and a bit cold. Now we're incorporating more detail, making spaces with a warmer feeling. Rooms are more comfortable, with more variety of colours and materials being used.

"Today my favourite is orange, but it is important to not be afraid of incorporating colour into designs. Don't shy away from using colours as accents as well — choose a base colour that's more neutral and then use bright colours as accents in pillows, throws or art. Fabrics with great patterns and textures will help make a space feel more inviting."

Stairs at Minto 30 Roe. CONTRIBUTED



© 2013 Rogers Communications.

Mid-century mash-up

The 1950s and '60s have offered up a lot of home-decor inspiration over the past year — anything retro or vintage-influenced is hot-hot-hot. The look is a mishmash of past design that can encompass a trip to the parental basement or a hunt through a vintage shop, and retailers have cleverly channelled it. Here are some trendy and stylish products to transport you back to a Mad Men era.

DESIGN CENTRE
Karl Lohnes
home@metronews.ca

Shiny citrus tones against deep grey stoneware lends retro style to dinner parties. Verte Dinnerware 16-piece set, $79, urbanbarn.com.

Adorn your dresser with heirloom-style brooches without robbing Mom's jewel box. Keepsake Brooch Knob, $14 US, anthropologie.com.

Save your quarters with this modernized pay phone and savings bank all in one; the perfect wall phone for calling a taxi. Crosley Vintage Style Pay Telephone, $90, sears.ca.

Light up your chandelier in true '70s style. 25-watt Chandelier Light Bulb set of four, $24 US, urbanoutfitters.com.

Inspired by late '50s Danish mid-century design; open and airy for a light look. Patrik Accent Chair, $1,600, thebay.com.

Straight out of Granny's china cabinet, fanciful flatware dresses up a modern table. Flores Flatware, from $7 per piece, zarahome.com.

Rooms with a view

A rendering of the Harbour Plaza Residences. CONTRIBUTED

Meet the condo

- **What.** Harbour Plaza Residences
- **Location.** 90 Harbour St.
- **Builder.** Menkes
- **Architect.** architectsAlliance
- **Designer.** Cecconi Simone Inc.
- **Sizes.** From 329 to 792 sq. ft.
- **Pricing.** From the mid-$200,000s
- **Building.** Two 65 and 69-storey glass towers set atop a three-storey retail podium
- **Suites.** 1,305 units in total
- **Phone.** 416-928-9998
- **Website.** menkes.com

The project overview

Harbour Plaza will have over 1,300 suites in two towers. Suites will feature high-quality finishes and custom-designed kitchens and bathrooms by Cecconi Simone, and include a variety of layout options ranging from studios to three-bedroom plans.

Location and transit

Located at Harbour and York Streets in Toronto's South Core district, Harbour Plaza will be directly connected to the extensive PATH network. It's a short walk to the Union Station transit hub with TTC and GO connections and quick access to the Gardiner Expressway.

In the neighbourhood

Residents will be surrounded by shops, restaurants and entertainment opportunities, as well as being close to the waterfront. World-class sports and entertainment venues include the Air Canada Centre, Rogers Centre, Sony Centre and the new Ripley's Aquarium.

Building amenities

Featuring a fourth-floor recreation centre with indoor pool and a state-of-the-art gym with separate areas for weights, cardio machines and kinesis equipment. Fifth-floor social spaces include an outdoor terrace area, media lounge and party room.

Award nominations

Making a splash south of the border

BRYAN TUCKEY
President and CEO of the Building Industry and Land Development Association (BILD) can be found at twitter.com/bildgta, facebook.com/bildgta, and bildblogs.ca.

Having worked in the building and development industry for more than 30 years, I have witnessed many examples of quality design and construction in Canada and abroad. I am also a firm believer that new homes in the GTA are among the best in the world.

That belief was recently reinforced when I reviewed the finalists for the 2014 National Sales and Marketing Awards. There are 24 nominations from the GTA.

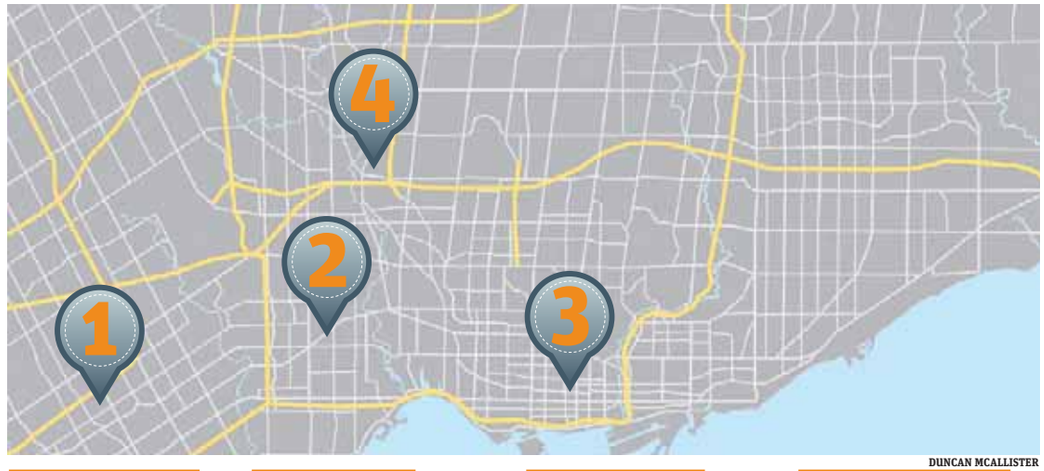
Better known as the Nationals, this awards presentation is the United States' largest competition for new-home sales and marketing professionals and communities. Currently in its 33rd year, the Nationals will be the highlight of the 2014 International Builders' Show in Las Vegas — an exposition and conference that routinely attracts more than 75,000 building industry professionals.

While submissions are mostly dominated by the Americans, the competition attracts entries from all parts of the world. Our members will be going head to head against some of the world's high-rise heavyweights from Panama, Shanghai and New York.

We'll be up against some tough competition, but I am confident that the quality, complete communities submitted by BILD members will give them a run for their money.

Winners will be announced on Feb. 4 and I'll be sure to update you on how our local builders, developers, and sales and marketing professionals line up against the best of the best.

What's hot on the condo market



DUNCAN MCALLISTER

1. Mississauga

Now Open: The Towns at Parkside Village. A new 68-unit, mid-rise development near Mississauga City Centre. Visit the sales centre at 465 Burnhamthorpe Rd. W. **CALL 905-273-9333 OR VISIT THETOWNS.CA FOR MORE INFORMATION.**

2. Etobicoke

Incentive Event: Vivid condominiums at Bloor and Islington. Limited-time financing options and discounts. Head over to the sales centre at 9 Michael Power Pl. **CALL 416-239-8200 OR VISIT VIVIDCONDOS.COM FOR MORE INFORMATION.**

3. Downtown

Open House: Condo unit at 55 Centre Ave., in the Bay Street corridor. Corner suite with 1,066 square feet. Two plus one bedrooms, two bathrooms; Dec. 22 from 2 to 4 p.m. **CALL 416-489-2121 FOR MORE INFORMATION.**

4. Sheppard West

The Brownstones at Westown. A collection of stacked, two-bedroom condo townhomes at Weston Road and Sheppard Avenue West. Visit the sales centre at 2277 Sheppard Ave. W. **CALL 416-740-1175 OR VISIT LINDVEST.COM FOR MORE INFORMATION.**

SPORTS 4

Juniors denied Rielly's services

NHL. Leafs standout rookie blue-liner will not be loaned to Hockey Canada for tournament in Sweden

Team Canada's defence — and its potential leadership core — took a bit of a body blow on Wednesday with word that the Maple Leafs intend to keep 19-year-old defenceman Morgan Rielly in the NHL.

There had been hope from Hockey Canada that the Leafs would loan the rookie to the world junior entry that is currently in camp in Copenhagen preparing for the tournament that begins on Boxing Day in Malmo, Sweden.

"Disappointment for sure," Scott Salmond, Hockey Canada's director of player personnel, told TSN. "Yeah, it was a long shot, but we were hopeful."

The Leafs' decision at least adds certainty for both Rielly and the Leafs but it puts the focus more squarely on the eight — mostly inexperienced — defenceman in camp for Team Canada.

Rielly played well last year and would have been a candidate for captain.

Morgan Rielly scored his first NHL goal in the Leafs' 3-1 loss on Monday in Pittsburgh. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

No D-men to spare

3.2 GAA

In large part, the Morgan Rielly decision was made out of necessity. Toronto remains one of the most outshot teams in the league. The Leafs are averaging more than 3.2 goals against per game since Nov. 2, and have lost 14 of 16 games when they allow three goals or more.

As things stand, only three players are returning from last year's squad: Forward Jonathan Drouin, defenceman Griffin Reinhart and goalie Jake Paterson. Paterson didn't play last year as Canada's third goalie. Drouin is skating again after suffering a concussion.

Reinhart comes with baggage: He must still serve three games of a suspension he incurred last year, meaning he won't be available until the last game of the preliminary round.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Raps' tank half full vs. Bobcats

Raptors shooting guard DeMar DeRozan throws down a monster dunk against the Charlotte Bobcats on Wednesday night at Air Canada Centre. DeRozan had 30 points but missed a free throw in the final seconds of overtime and the Bobcats won 104-102 on Kemba Walker's buzzer beater.

STEVE RUSSELL/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Dwayne De Rosario GETTY IMAGES

MLS. Toronto FC sets up rosy reunion with De Rosario

Toronto FC thought long and hard about bringing Dwayne De Rosario home.

The team's all-time leading scorer, DeRo has won everything there is to win in MLS. But the former league MVP is 35 and made a whopping $654,300 US last season. Plus he left Toronto on bad terms in 2011.

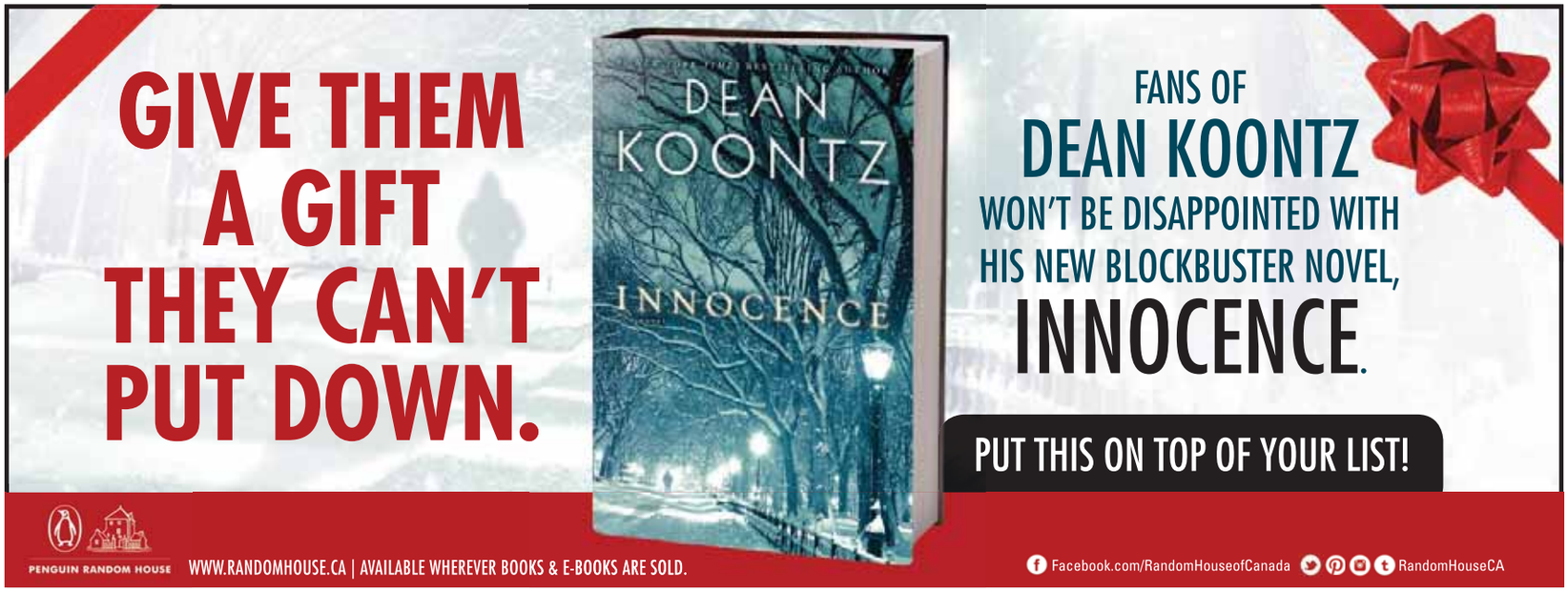
In the end, the conclusion was the attacking midfielder would be a welcome asset if he were to agree to a new role and reduced contract number.

It seems everyone is on the same page, with Toronto choosing the former D.C. United star in Stage 2 of the MLS re-entry draft Wednesday.

While Toronto had yet to get his signature on a contract as of the re-entry draft announcement, MLSE boss Tim Leiweke talked as if a deal was all but done.

De Rosario became available when D.C. United opted not to pick up his option at the end of the season. Playing for the league's worst team in 2013, the Canadian had three goals and two assists in 24 games.

THE CANADIAN PRESS



Reigning skeleton champ at risk of missing Olympics

Jon Montgomery.
Vancouver gold medallist in tough to earn Canada's final men's position at Winter Games

Quoted

"I know I created the bed I'm sleeping in, but I'm only disappointed. Disappointed is fleeting. Regret is lasting."

Jon Montgomery doesn't regret taking off the 2011-12 season or the move to a new sled, which hasn't translated into success on the track.

The man who gave the host country one of its most memorable moments of the 2010 Winter Olympics faces long odds to compete at the next Winter Games.

Jon Montgomery's gold medal in skeleton at the Whistler Sliding Centre and his subsequent auctioning off of a pitcher of beer in the village square elevated him to folk-hero status.

But the 34-year-old from Russell, Man., might not make the 2014 team for Sochi, Russia, in February.

Montgomery's results the last season and a half have yet to meet Bobsleigh Canada Skeleton's qualification criteria.

He needs to hit the ball out of the park and also have a little luck in the four races he has left to qualify before Jan. 19.

"Unfortunately for me, I'm fighting an uphill battle in that regard," Montgomery said Wednesday in Calgary.

Mellisa Hollingsworth of Eckville, Alta., Calgary's Sarah Reid and John Fairbairn and Eric Neilson of Kelowna, B.C., were introduced Wednesday as Canada's skeleton athletes for Sochi.

Canada can qualify a third man and a third woman for Sochi in January, according to head coach Duff Gibson. Should Canada gain those berths, Montgomery is up against Dave Greszczyszyn of Burlington for the final spot on the men's team. It will come down to points earned in races.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

NHL

EASTERN CONFERENCE

ATLANTIC DIVISION

	GP	W	L	OL	GF	GA	Pt
Boston	34	23	9	2	94	70	48
Montreal	36	21	12	3	91	76	45
Tampa Bay	34	20	11	3	93	82	43
Detroit	36	15	12	9	91	99	39
Toronto	36	17	16	3	99	105	37
Ottawa	35	14	15	6	99	113	34
Florida	35	13	17	5	81	110	31
Buffalo	34	8	23	3	59	98	19

METROPOLITAN DIVISION

	GP	W	L	OL	GF	GA	Pt
Pittsburgh	35	24	10	1	108	75	49
Washington	34	18	13	3	107	102	39
Carolina	34	14	13	7	79	94	35
Philadelphia	34	15	15	4	81	93	34
NY Rangers	34	16	17	1	76	91	33
New Jersey	34	13	15	6	78	85	32
Columbus	34	14	16	4	87	95	32
NY Islanders	35	9	19	7	85	121	25

WESTERN CONFERENCE

CENTRAL DIVISION

	GP	W	L	OL	GF	GA	Pt
Chicago	37	25	7	5	138	102	55
St. Louis	33	22	7	4	114	80	48
Colorado	33	22	10	1	96	78	45
Minnesota	36	20	11	5	84	83	45
Dallas	33	16	12	5	95	101	37
Nashville	34	16	15	3	78	95	35
Winnipeg	36	15	16	5	95	106	35

PACIFIC DIVISION

	GP	W	L	OL	GF	GA	Pt
Anaheim	36	24	7	5	116	91	53
Los Angeles	35	23	8	4	97	68	50
San Jose	34	21	7	6	112	84	48
Vancouver	36	20	10	6	100	86	46
Phoenix	33	18	10	5	105	103	41
Calgary	34	13	16	5	86	108	31
Edmonton	36	11	22	3	93	123	25

Note: Two points for a win, one point for overtime loss.

Wednesday's results
Ottawa at New Jersey
Pittsburgh at NY Rangers

Tuesday's results
Boston 2 Calgary 0
Buffalo 4 Winnipeg 2
Tampa Bay 3 NY Islanders 2 (SO)
Florida 3 Toronto 1
Anaheim 5 Detroit 2
Montreal 3 Phoenix 1
Philadelphia 5 Washington 2
Minnesota 3 Vancouver 2 (SO)
San Jose 4 St. Louis 2
Chicago 3 Nashville 1
Dallas 3 Colorado 2
Los Angeles 3 Edmonton 0

Thursday's games
All Times Eastern
Phoenix at Toronto, 7 p.m.
Minnesota at Pittsburgh, 7 p.m.
Boston at Buffalo, 7 p.m.
Columbus at Philadelphia, 7 p.m.
Calgary at Detroit, 7:30 p.m.
Nashville at Tampa Bay, 7:30 p.m.
Florida at Ottawa, 7:30 p.m.
Montreal at St. Louis, 8 p.m.
Vancouver at Dallas, 8:30 p.m.
Edmonton at Colorado, 9:30 p.m.
San Jose at Los Angeles, 10:30 p.m.

Friday's games
Anaheim at New Jersey, 7 p.m.
Washington at Carolina, 7 p.m.
NY Islanders at NY Rangers, 7 p.m.
Florida at Winnipeg, 8 p.m.
Vancouver at Chicago, 8 p.m.

Saturday's games
Calgary at Pittsburgh, 1 p.m.
Phoenix at Ottawa, 2 p.m.
Colorado at Los Angeles, 4 p.m.
Montreal at Nashville, 7 p.m.
Anaheim at NY Islanders, 7 p.m.
Carolina at Tampa Bay, 7 p.m.
Buffalo at Boston, 7 p.m.
Detroit at Toronto, 7 p.m.
Philadelphia at Columbus, 7 p.m.
New Jersey at Washington, 7 p.m.
St. Louis at Edmonton, 10 p.m.
Dallas at San Jose, 10:30 p.m.

SCORING LEADERS

	G	A	Pts
Crosby, Pgh	19	28	47
Kane, Chi	20	26	46
Malkin, Pgh	9	32	41
Getzlaf, Ana	16	23	39
Ovechkin, Wash	28	10	38
Tavares, NYI	13	25	38
Perry, Ana	22	15	37

Not including last night's games

NBA

EASTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	Pct	GB
d-Indiana	20	4	.833	—
d-Miami	18	6	.750	2
Atlanta	13	12	.520	7½
d-Boston	12	14	.462	9
Detroit	12	14	.462	9
Charlotte	11	14	.440	9½
Washington	10	13	.435	9½
Toronto	9	13	.409	10
Chicago	9	14	.391	10½
Cleveland	9	15	.375	11
Brooklyn	9	15	.375	11
Orlando	8	17	.320	12½
New York	7	17	.292	13
Philadelphia	7	19	.269	14
Milwaukee	5	19	.208	15

WESTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	Pct	GB
d-Portland	22	4	.846	—
Oklahoma City	20	4	.833	1
d-San Antonio	19	5	.792	2
d-L.A. Clippers	17	9	.654	5
Houston	16	9	.640	5½
Phoenix	14	9	.609	6½
Denver	14	10	.583	7
Dallas	14	10	.583	7
Golden State	14	12	.538	8
Minnesota	12	13	.480	9½
L.A. Lakers	12	13	.480	9½
New Orleans	11	12	.478	9½
Memphis	10	14	.417	11
Sacramento	7	16	.304	13½
Utah	6	21	.222	16½

x - clinched playoff berth; **y** - division; **z** - conference.

Wednesday's results
Utah at Orlando
Charlotte at Toronto
Indiana at Miami
Sacramento at Atlanta
Detroit at Boston
Washington at Brooklyn
New York at Milwaukee
Portland at Minnesota
Memphis at Dallas
San Antonio at Phoenix
Chicago at Houston
New Orleans at L.A. Clippers

Thursday's games
Chicago at Oklahoma City, 8 p.m.
San Antonio at Golden State, 10:30 p.m.

Maple Leafs' excuses are wearing thin

THE HOCKEY NEWS
Adam Proteau
toronto@metronews.ca

The Maple Leafs' inconsistency — one moment, looking fast and skilled in a victory over the defending champion Blackhawks; the next, appearing soft and disinterested in a loss to the win-challenged Florida Panthers — remains the team's hallmark.

But Toronto's plummet down the Eastern Conference standings after a strong start to the season can't be attributed to injuries. This is all on the guys still in the room.

Yes, the tendon injury suffered by veteran centre David Bolland left a sizable hole in the lineup. And the groin woes that sidelined No. 1 centre Tyler Bozak haven't done the Leafs any favours. But all you had to do was examine another of Toronto's opponents this week — the Pittsburgh Penguins — to see that a ravaged roster doesn't stop other NHL teams from competing night-in and night-out.

When the Pens beat the Leafs 3-1 Monday, they were missing their top four defencemen and star forwards Evgeni Malkin and James Neal. You can make the case the presence of superstar centre Sidney Crosby still made Pittsburgh a more dangerous squad, but you'd also have to admit Toronto held the advantage in overall depth and talent in its attack and on the blue-line.

Hockey is still a team game, and the Leafs simply didn't function as a unit.

That's what made their lack of effort against the Panthers particularly maddening: With even a minimal amount of patience, physical willpower and smart decision-making, the Leafs have more than enough talent to outlast Florida. But there was none of that on hand Tuesday at the Air Canada Centre.

Fatigue can't be an excuse, either. It doesn't matter Toronto was playing its fourth game in six nights when they took on the Panthers. Good teams don't play the tired card.

No, the truth is the best teams have a workmanlike quality to them the entire year.

Off-nights are understandable. Off-weeks or off-months, not so much.

Toronto forward Mason Raymond says the Maple Leafs "got embarrassed" in Tuesday's 3-1 loss to the Florida Panthers. DEREK LEUNG/GETTY IMAGES

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Horoscopes

♈ Aries
March 21 - April 20
You may have lots of big ideas in your mind but are you ever going to get around to turning them into something useful, something that makes a difference both to yourself and to others?

♉ Taurus
April 21 - May 21
You may resent having to pay for something you think you should get for free but if you make a scene you may end up paying even more.

♊ Gemini
May 22 - June 21
Partnerships of all kinds have been under the spotlight of late and will remain so until the Sun moves out of your opposite sign this weekend.

♋ Cancer
June 22 - July 23
It may seem as if someone is trying to undermine your position, and maybe they are, but there is no need to worry about it.

♌ Leo
July 24 - Aug. 23
You have been in impressive form of late but all good things must come to an end and life may not be quite so easy when the Sun changes signs on the 21st. If there is anything of a creative nature that needs doing then do it now.

♍ Virgo
Aug. 24 - Sept. 23
If you feel the need to kiss and make up with a partner or relative now is the time. If you leave it much longer you may find that it isn't so easy or, worse, that they have found the love they need with someone else.

♎ Libra
Sept. 24 - Oct. 23
What happens over the next few days will help you to understand that your priorities are wrong, that you are worrying about the things you cannot change while neglecting the things you can.

♏ Scorpio
Oct. 24 - Nov. 22
Slow things right down and take stock of how far you have come, because only then will you be in a position to decide how far you still have to go.

♐ Sagittarius
Nov. 23 - Dec. 21
The Sun remains in your sign only until Saturday, so get busy and get as much done as you can between now and then.

♑ Capricorn
Dec. 22 - Jan. 20
When the Sun moves into your sign this weekend a new solar year begins. Make it your objective, today and tomorrow, to look back over the past 12 months and learn what you can from your mistakes.

♒ Aquarius
Jan. 21 - Feb. 19
Spend as much time as you can with your friends today because you may not get so many opportunities to be sociable in the days and weeks to follow.

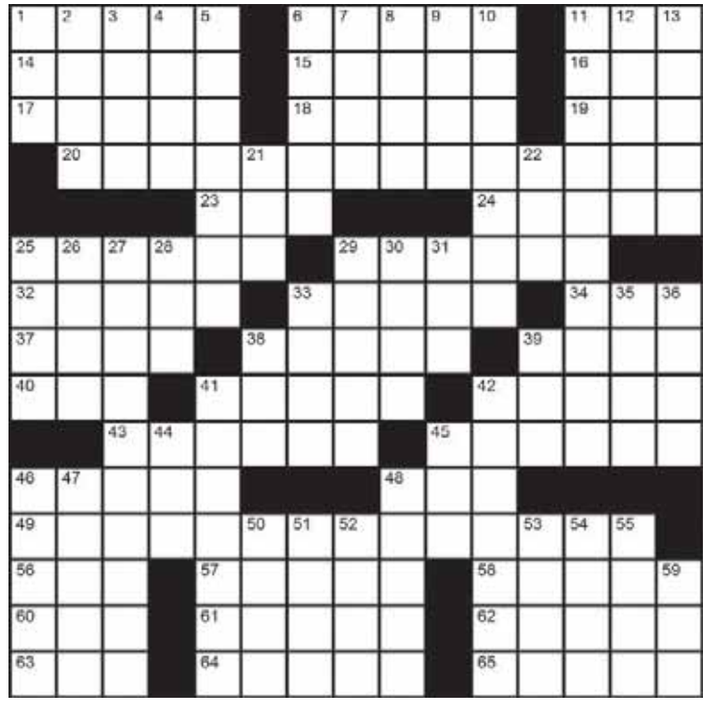
♓ Pisces
Feb. 20 - March 20
You need to convince those in positions of power that you deserve to be given more responsibility and the rewards that go with it. Timing is everything and the right time is now.

SALLY BROMPTON

Crossword: Canada Across and Down

See today's answers at metronews.ca/answers.

BY KELLY ANN BUCHANAN



Across
1. Tropical nut
6. __ __ behold!
11. "Pick a Puppy" channel
14. "ER" actress Ms. Tierney
15. Ewoks' forest moon home
16. Not 'neath
17. 'Material' suffix
18. Invest
19. San Francisco's __ Valley
20. Prospector in "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer": 2 wds.
23. __-Jongg
24. Actor's tucked-into-shoes devices
25. Country song-stress, __ Lynne
29. Sidekick to #20-Across
32. Birchbark craft
33. Range
34. NHL official
37. With a flair for crafts
38. Lyrical lament
39. Bygone time
40. Golfer's gadget
41. Partake in Winter fun
42. "...not a creature was stirring, not even a __."
43. Prince __, British Columbia
45. Awakens
46. "The Birds" (1963) star Ms. Hedren
48. Highway topping
49. They're on the Canadian side at Niagara: 2 wds.
56. Pasta names suffix
57. Environment Minister, Ms. Aglukkaq
58. Donald Trump's first wife
60. '_' __ for Rimouski
61. Gourmand
62. 'frisco footballer
63. Actor, Daniel __ Kim
64. Skirt alternative
65. Kind of duck

Down
1. Dieter's stat.
2. Simple
3. Ballet outfit
4. Mr. Estrada
5. Alberta city between Red Deer and Edmonton
6. Bloodsucker
7. Never, __ __ occasion
8. Env. info
9. Morning's follower
10. Phys. of 1969 to 1976 TV: 2 wds.
11. Like many a Christmas Tree
12. "Count __ __." (I don't want to participate)
13. Lock of hair
21. "Nope."
22. Rap music's Kim
25. Hightail it
26. Tortoise's competitor
27. Hamlet in the Northwest Territories
28. Actress Myrna
29. "Grace Under Fire" star Ms. Butler
30. Try to persuade
31. Vachon treat, __ West
33. Wing-like
35. Poet's 'previously'
36. Charges
38. Just manage, __ out
39. Particular pronoun
41. Said one's lengthy piece
42. Banff National Park: __ Lake, it's glacier-fed
44. Sit-__ (Exercises)
45. UK military service
46. Race place
47. Ancient Greek colony
48. "__ are Not Enough" by Northern Lights
50. Singe
51. Table d'__ (Fixed price restaurant menu)
52. Threes - twos = whats?
53. Old Rome's 57
54. Ground
55. Dagger
59. ETA part, for short

Yesterday's Crossword

Sudoku

How to play
Fill in the grid, so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9. There is no math involved.

7		8		4	5			1
	5		8					2
	1		3				8	
9							2	
		4	6		7	1		
	6							3
	7				2		1	
3					9		5	
6			5	1		8		

Yesteday's Sudoku

6	1	9	3	7	4	2	8	5
4	5	7	8	9	2	1	3	6
2	3	8	1	5	6	7	4	9
3	4	2	7	1	5	6	9	8
1	8	6	9	4	3	5	7	2
9	7	5	6	2	8	4	1	3
8	2	3	4	6	7	9	5	1
7	6	1	5	8	9	3	2	4
5	9	4	2	3	1	8	6	7

Today
3°/-3°
Cloudy

Friday
3°/-4°
Rain
90%

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